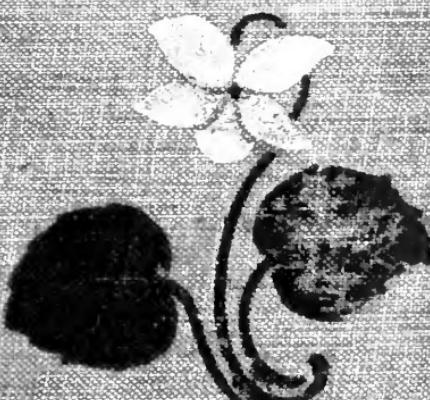
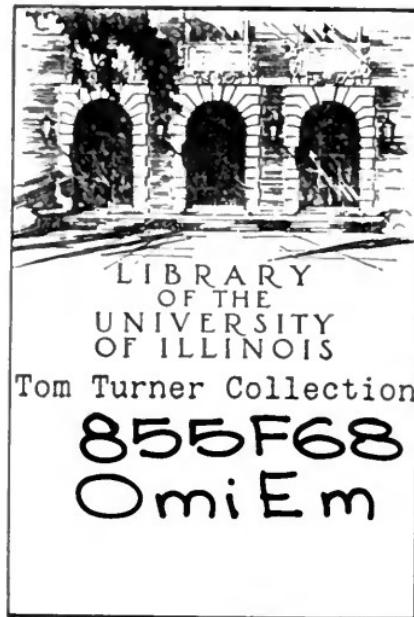


The POET'S MYSTERY

Antonio
Fogazzaro





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THE POET'S MYSTERY

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THE POET'S MYSTERY

A NOVEL

TRANSLATED FROM THE
ITALIAN OF
ANTONIO FOGAZZARO
BY
ANITA MAC MAHON
VERSES RENDERED BY
ALGERNON WARREN



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Introductory letter from Antonio Fogazzaro to the Editor of the Nuova Antologia, in which "The Poet's Mystery" first appeared.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have received the enclosed manuscript from a lady, whom I have not the honour of knowing personally.

"An exquisite letter accompanied it, which I should like to have also sent you; but as I was desired not to do this, I must confine myself to briefly indicating its substance.

"The manuscript was bequeathed to this lady by the author—an Italian writer of some renown, who died rather suddenly a few years ago.

"In these pages he relates what he believes to be an unknown part of his life, which he would like his friend to publish, under certain prescribed circumstances.

"It now appears, however, that, poet-like, he deluded himself about this secret, which

was in reality tolerably well known to several people in the little Lombardian town where he lived.

"This being the case, the publication of the manuscript may appear unnecessary ; this lady, however, feels that at a time when so many vulgar love-stories are printed, it would be wrong for her to keep back this narration of a love she describes as 'divine.'

"She therefore suggests that it should be published in the form of a romance, concealing the name of the author, and altering the others, with the exception of one which her heart would not allow her to touch ; as title she proposes 'The Poet's Mystery,' on account of a certain conversation towards the end of the narrative, which I need not here repeat.

"I, unfortunately, am not youthful enough to be as moved as this gracious lady was by the pathos of the story ; yet as I think that the love here described is far more uncommon in modern literature than in real life, I am glad to assist in making it known.

"Whether the names are kept back or altered, appears to me quite immaterial, so I left the matter entirely to the lady's conscience, only stipulating that if one be altered, all should be altered—what she responded,

and what decision she took, does not concern the public.

"She wished the narrative to be published in the *Nuova Antologia*, where other works from the same pen appeared between 1865 and 1880; I therefore send the manuscript, in the hope that you may be able to accede to her request.

"I should like these lines of mine to be inserted at the beginning of 'The Poet's Mystery,' to which they would serve as introduction.

"Thanking you, dear sir, in anticipation, and with assurances of my profound esteem,

"I am,

"Yours, etc.,

"ANTONIO FOGAZZARO."

"VICENZA, 15th November 1887."

THE POET'S MYSTERY

CHAPTER I

TO-DAY, the 2nd of November 1881, I have resolved to write down the secret from which my life derives all its wealth and power, though of this neither my relatives nor friends have, as far as I know, any suspicion; only one person in Italy has heard anything from me, and her I know too well to fear that she would have betrayed my confidence.

I allude to you, *cara e fedele amica*, and if these pages recall to your mind the little Lombardian church, set in the verdure of mountainous pastures where the subtle voice of water alone breaks the solitude, you will also remember how I once made you there a confession which was broken by tearless sobs and an emotion that was not altogether pain.

After my death you will receive this manuscript from my heirs, and it will then be for you to relate or keep its contents silent.

In case the world continues to ignore our story, only speak of it, *amica mia*, to God in prayer; and if some journalist travelling outside Italy should hear a vague report of my heart's tragedy, and afterwards publish this for

the sake of some trifling gain, without, however, other offence than inaccuracy of detail, it will suffice for you to tell the truth privately to those who at that time still care for me.

But if anyone writes falsehoods that could disturb or grieve us, then, with clasped hands and anguished heart, I implore you to immediately publish this narrative of mine.

On earth, henceforward, Violet and myself have but one thing to dread, one sorrow only do we beg God to spare us ; that is—scandal.

This is scarcely possible, and I hope our prayer will be heard. If, however, the Divine Wisdom should will it otherwise, do you, *amica mia*, all we ourselves should do if we yet lived.

If the truth of this manuscript should be questioned, my friend, Dr Paul Steele of Rudesheim on the Rhine, Prussia, will, on request, furnish you with proofs and documents to confirm it.

It is the day of All Souls and the fog hovers cloud-like outside the windows of the solitary villa where I am my nephew's guest ; on the piano below someone is practising a monotonous musical exercise, and in an adjoining room I hear the hushed footsteps of servants.

No one has an idea of what I do or what I feel as, absorbed in memories of the past, my heart throbs, my hand trembles, and sobs rise

in my throat ; yet I myself feel what I write here to be so cold.

I would fain speak not with words that die, but rather from the shades of the unknown world, in the eternal voice which, without pause, goes ever onward, till it is heard, perhaps, in spheres inaccessible to the human eye, if there be spirits there capable of hearing sounds.

This narrative is not for the world, but only for the generous souls that a calumny wouldadden, or the perverse ones that would take pleasure in it.

Would it be wiser then to lay aside my pen and trust myself to God ?

I think of Violet, who is always my guiding star, and hear her voice—the sweetest, I believe, that ever sounded from human lips—say to me tenderly : Write, love !

CHAPTER II

You know, *amica mia*, that up to 1872, I had no secrets from you, and if we, although free, have not been lovers, it is perhaps, because we have too much affinity of sentiment, too close a communion of ideas and too much fraternity of nature: between us two love would have seemed unholy.

This at least was the bizarre conclusion we once arrived at together; we had, however, other reasons, you and I. Here naturally I shall not touch on yours, but you will probably remember a dream that I related to you in the winter of 1872, one evening when we were alone, and I brought you a curious book called "Du Sommeil et des Rêves."

The strangeness of my dream lay in the fact that I dreamt it twice with an interval of nine years between.

In my early youth I read the poetic German legend of a well so profound that neither the eye nor any human instrument could reach the water, until one day there came a troubadour who sat on the side of the well and played softly; after a while the water stirred, he played on, and the water rose little by little,

higher and higher, until, at last, it sparkled at the brink.

The following night I dreamt that I was drawn out of an unknown abyss by the power of a sweet voice that spoke above me, in a foreign accent, some incomprehensible words ; I awoke weeping, in a state of agitation which lasted several hours, full of the irrational idea that the voice heard in my dream really existed, and recalling its peculiarly musical inflection as clearly as I could, in fear lest I should forget it.

As a matter of fact, I did forget it, and quickly, but I did not forget the dream, and the idea did not leave me that it was a prophetic one, a mysterious communication from the Divinity.

No feminine voice ever afterwards reminded me of that one, but in the January of 1872, during a convalescence, I had again the same identical dream, and heard again the sweet voice with its foreign accent. Eight or ten days later, I came to you and brought you the book "*Du Sommeil et des Rêves*."

It is almost impossible that you have forgotten my agitation on that evening.

It may be that I am by nature a mystic, and inclined to believe in some latent forces of the human mind, and in some of its secret relations with the supernatural ; it is certainly true that, before the January of 1872, I had already

twice experienced, though not in dreams, such direct communications, once at the age of twelve, another time when I was fourteen.

The first time I was troubled and frightened although the warning was but slight, the idea was so new to me, and the inner voice had spoken so suddenly and clearly; this was verified sixteen years later.

The second time did not treat of presentiments, and only in the life to come shall I know whether it was a delirium of the soul or really the voice of another spirit, as I believed and still believe and have testified to in one of my books.

Naturally, therefore, this second dream made a very great impression on me. I believed, with, if possible, greater fervour than the first time, in the real existence of the voice that I had heard, and in the salutary, powerful influence which the person who spoke would one day have over me.

You, who know how I was circumstanced in the January of 1872, can imagine my distress of mind, for I then thought myself irrevocably bound, though when I think of the origin and nature of this bond, a bitter smile comes to my lips, I pity the lady, I pity and deride myself.

This intimacy has been falsely spoken of in the world, so it is as well that I should touch briefly on it here.

You are aware that for a long time I had known the beautiful and intelligent Signora, to whom people, before our relations became so intimate, attributed a lover. I used sometimes to visit her and we met often in society. I believed that she was absolutely indifferent to me, and I returned the indifference, few people, however, aroused in me such a strain of sarcastic humour as she did.

One evening, in the theatre, when looking through my opera-glass, I met hers twice turned towards me, and, on the second occasion, she returned my gaze for some time before turning hers elsewhere.

I imagined my heart to be touched, but probably it was instead the nerves of vanity and curiosity that simulated a heart throb.

I looked for and encountered her regard many more times; then I visited the Signora in her box; her demeanour towards me was quite novel, and she gave me, in the presence of other people, such evident marks of favour as to embarrass me.

As I returned home that night I believed myself in love, and, at the same time, thought I ought to tell the Signora so, which imperious duty I fulfilled two days later.

The lady in question was, as you know, married, and my greatest fault is to have yielded, not to the passion of true love, but rather to a faint shadow of it.

She replied that she was much distressed by my words, adding to my great surprise, that for some time past she had been aware of my sympathy, and that she had had on her side a certain leaning towards me in consequence, which she could not conceal from me, but that she would have preferred that there had never been any question of this between us, as she was resolved not to fail in her duty.

Before, it would have been possible to meet frequently and intimately as friends. Now, one could no longer think of such a thing.

She counselled me to overcome my affection, which could not yet have taken profound root ; it would then, in a short time, be possible for us to enjoy in peace the benefits of a pure and close friendship, such as we both, perhaps, stood in need of.

I then realised with discomfort that I did not love her at all, so chilled was I by this discourse. I said to myself that I had stupidly fallen into the snare of a perfidious coquette, yet still, through a false sense of honour, I lied and did not accept the egress she offered me, but instead protested that friendship would not suffice me.

God knows if I were punished afterwards for such cowardice, when I related it throb-bingly to *her*, together with all the faults and miseries that rendered me unworthy of that sublime love.

A tender grave word, a kiss from her lips, made me pure again, as we are purified by the wave of infinitude that passes sometimes over our souls after prayer ; henceforward the past no longer grieved or shamed me.

Such was the origin of my bond. I do not believe that the lady ever really loved me, but rather imagine that the gossip there had been about her and the husband of one of her friends was false, and that she had thought of this unfortunate way of contradicting it ; vanity had induced her to select someone who wrote verses and of whom the papers and society sometimes spoke ; finally, she had probably had a kind of intellectual curiosity about love, as well as a natural craving for emotion which made her wish to suffer, and cause others to suffer, sufficiently to enable her to feel this life intensely, without, at the same time, perilling the next.

She said to me, in fact, that, if I would love her with an affection restrained by duty, she could not forbid it to me, but that we should both be unhappy, and that she would also feel remorse at keeping me from matrimony, so desirable for one who had no relatives save a married brother, and my age would not suffer a long delay.

The more she encouraged me to separate myself from her, the more I resisted and felt myself urged to bind myself faster.

What an unhappy year that was for me!

Sometimes I had the illusion that I loved the Signora, and then I was irritated to find her always so rigid and secure in her virtue, so mistress of herself at all times.

Much oftener, however, I felt myself cold, and chafed at my false position ; I suffered also from her exacting nature, for, saying that she was jealous of my muse, she would have liked to reign alone in my intellect and inspire me according to her ideas and inclinations.

She had no lack of intelligence or culture, but, if between you and me, *cara amica*, there is, perhaps, too much affinity of soul, there was, on the contrary, too little between me and that Signora.

She had the cult of elegance ; not only her refinement of person and dress was seductive, but there was exquisite fascination even in her slightest gesture, and in every word and movement, which much attracted me ; she, however, carried this cult also into art, thus making in our relations a cleft, which, though fine as a razor's cut, and scarcely visible on the surface, went deep down, and absolutely separated us.

Although she did not say so to me, she found some of my verses too democratically clothed, too remote from that affected nobility of form, without which, for her, there was no poetry.

I discovered this when discoursing with her of other poets, and was wounded by such independence of judgment, since she had many times, both by speech and letter, confessed to loving me. I had another ideal of love, and in the past had been loved in another fashion, in which the heart had ruled over every faculty and inclination of the mind.

However, I would not have been so estranged by this if she had given me other signs of a strong and profound sentiment, or if, at least now and again, I had seen her incapable of controlling her passion.

But she dominated herself always, and even when discoursing with me on questions of little importance, always tenaciously insisted on her own point.

I was therefore convinced that her sentiment was not real, and since I was not myself in love, I resolved to break with her.

She must have suspected this when we met in town, in the December of 1871, after two months of separation.

My idea was to leave after Christmas for San Remo, and there pass the winter, but I fell ill, and she then conceived the imprudent wish of wanting to see me.

I was living with my brother, and she did not know my sister-in-law. On this occasion, however, she visited her, and asked if she might see me.

My pious sister-in-law was so astounded and scandalised that, notwithstanding her timidity, she hesitated somewhat before consenting, and I am sure that she afterwards scrupled having done so.

Great gossip was, in fact, made in town over this visit, and on my recovery I became aware of this, and feared by leaving to commit a *lachete*.

My life was then one constant fluctuation between mind and heart, both without light.

On the night between the 12th and 13th of January I had again the mysterious dream, and I came to you immediately that I was in a state to go out, in the evening of the 20th or 21st.

Cara amica, you had reason to be offended with me. For a year I had unworthily neglected you; not that my old friendship for you had lessened, but because I was ashamed of myself, and therefore kept away from you.

That evening I came as if borne on a whirlwind and told you all. I related my dream to you with such fervent belief in its supernatural origin and its prophetic signification, that you thought me threatened with madness. You said that I was not yet quite recovered, and needed mental rest; that I ought to travel a little to distract myself, and lay down my pen awhile.

I would have followed your advice if the

husband's jealousy had not then been at last aroused, and again, I thought I ought not to desert the lady.

We could now only see one another very rarely, yet, by some curious perversity of the heart, just when there was anguish and peril in loving, just when another person began to feel injured and to suffer bitterly, and that society blamed us, it seemed as if a breath of real passion entered into us, and even the Signora no longer appeared so secure of herself.

That the world considered us culpable was like a brake half raised, and to prematurely endure the pangs incumbent on the after consequences of sin was a powerful incentive to it.

For my part I was conscious of descending little by little towards an abyss from which hot flames rose to excite the senses ; conscious that it was perdition, yet feeling myself drawn there by the same perverse instinct.

Nevertheless at times I arrested myself in terror, for a similar passion, sensual rather than intellectual, was contrary to my creed, and to the high ideal to which I wished to elevate myself in life and art.

I felt that I was imprinting a mark of hypocrisy and shame upon my life and work, and on my memory in the future, and that I was basely betraying my standard.

Yet still I had not the resolution afterwards to abstain from seeing her on the few occasions that it was now possible, knowing with what confidence I was expected ; and when I was with her, her beauty and troubled spirit almost deprived me of my senses.

Fortunately our meetings were neither frequent, long, secret, nor secure ; it is also only right to say that the intention to act honestly, though somewhat dulled and shaken, never left the Signora.

Thus passed some months, perhaps to be reckoned as the most agitated and unhappy of my life.

It was certainly the time of my greatest intellectual aridity and inertness, for during those months I do not think that I wrote a single verse or ever turned to study.

I have dwelt long on this episode, though it has little connection with the thread of my story, because I wish to tell within what limits it really remained, and also to expiate, in part at least, my culpable weakness by an explanation that may, in my city, help to efface the memory of a past scandal, but which will diminish my reputation abroad among those who have read my books and are ignorant of these miseries.

Having thus lingered over a, to me, painful introduction, pardon me if I now proceed still more slowly, since I come to the infinite

pleasure of delineating and even, after a manner, again bringing before my eyes the time that in my mind lives eternally. *Melius quam cum aliis versari est tui memimisse.*

Cara amica, this story, of which I shall here relate a little every day, will become yours ; if you must make it known to the world, the heartless world, see that your friend is not considered senilely verbose and importunate.

I do not say this through "amour propre" ; pardon me, it is a fantastic doubt of mine, that perhaps the good and evil one thinks and says of us on earth, can after death still cause us pleasure or pain, inasmuch as it is the fruit of our works : I feel as if hard human judgments might follow us even to eternity, and, more than myself, sadden my Beloved.

I write these last words of introduction at six in the morning.

The air is pure and a soft moonlight is quietly giving place to a serene dawn ; beneath the house a dense white sea of mist lies over the valley.

So would I like it to be, *amica mia*, wherever we shall be after death, until the dawn of eternal day, and that from the earth, still enveloped in ignorance and human sadness, no malignant vapour would rise to us.

CHAPTER III

IN the June of 1872 the Signora went with her husband to spend the summer on the Lake of Geneva ; they intended to return to Italy by the Simplon, and to make a short stay at Stresa or Pallanza on Lake Maggiore.

From Geneva she was to write and tell me if a secret visit would be possible there ; if not, I was to try and see her on Lake Maggiore ; in the meantime I promised her that I would work ardently.

The absolute intellectual inertia into which love had thrown me had indeed mortified and surprised her not a little, though inwardly I perfectly understood it.

During a year and a half I had only written four or five amorous lyrics, elegant to the best of my power, because such was her taste, but cold.

She was just then enamoured of the "Idylls of the King," and wished me to write something in the same style, as refined and elegant as possible.

I promised to do so, and, feeling in need of mountain air and quietness, I decided to go up to Lanzo d'Intelvi, where I knew of the

Hotel Belvedere, which was comfortable, select, admirably situated in a picturesque solitude, and frequented almost exclusively by the English ; there I would be able to work in peace.

I went up there on the 28th June, and, as I passed through Argegno, the valley was so fresh and green and the air so pure, that I seemed to breathe in liberty, innocence and vitality !

My *vetturino* stopped for a few minutes in the little hamlet of Pellio, a cluster of houses with windows full of gilly flowers, situated in the midst of chestnut groves.

I descended to the fountain, where a lovely girl, with bronzed hands and milk-white arms, stood drawing water ; she offered me some to drink, and, on my asking if it were good, replied in her dialect : "*La guariss de tucc i maa*" (It cures all ills).

I regarded her with admiration.

"Really all ?" I replied.

She gave no further answer, but smiled and blushed as if she had read in my mind.

I drank from her pail and, as I left Pellio, thought that perhaps her little mouth, her simple heart and her milk-white arms might really have been able to cure every ill.

She might serve for the idyll I was in search of, interwoven with a little drama and mystery. Those snowy arms were more like a goddess' than an Alpine peasant's.

As we mounted slowly among the mountains I found that my old friend nature, after two years of silence, was beginning to speak to me again.

One must be a useless visionary to understand what a joy it is to feel that the waters, stones and plants have received one back into favour.

It seemed to me a sign that I would at last be able to write. When the mountains speak to me the first effect is a tender melancholy and languid desire to have done with the things of this world ; afterwards, however, comes the fervour of conception and the facility of writing. Mendelssohn has sometimes the same effect on me.

At the hotel there was no letter from Geneva, and I was glad of this.

I, who, when in love, had never loved more strongly than in absence, now, away from the Signora, no longer felt her influence.

There were not many staying at the hotel ; at the table d'hôte at six o'clock we were about thirty, nearly all English. I sat next a beautiful and elegant "blonde," whose eyes were as oriental as the audaciously singular rose perfume which she used. The other ladies were mostly old and ugly.

In the midst of the solemn silence of the foreigners, the four or five Italians had a rather depressed air and regarded me with evident

desire to enroll me for the walks, gossip and billiards.

This horrified me, and therefore I was freezing to a little old gentleman who, after dinner, made me a preamble on my celebrated poems (!) and told me how ill at ease he and his companions felt among the English, and how glad they were of my arrival.

He added that his name was Cavalier So-and-So, the others were Count This and Cavalier That; the fourth had no title but was, all the same, a very well-bred person.

Finally, this poor gentleman promised me that he would ask the cook to give us a little less plum-pudding, and to have a little more respect for the national minority; then he left me in peace and we never spoke together again.

I went out to take coffee under the horse-chestnuts of the Belvedere, where my lovely neighbour stood admiring the fiery sunset and the magnificent distant splendour of the eternal snows on the horizon.

I, however, looked at neither sky nor Alps, nor at the lady herself; my gaze went straight across the lake lying in the dark abyss at our feet, till, beyond the first grassy slopes of the mountain opposite, it rested on a colossal rock, with its family of turrets lying in ruins around it, which had been familiar and dear to my eyes for many years.

I had been a timid and haughty child. At sixteen years, with my head full of Leopardi and Victor Hugo, of pantheism and pessimism, with a great outward contempt for humanity, and a desperate inner longing to be praised by men and loved by women, I had had the melodramatic idea of making a grave for myself on this rock.

I had not seen it now for some time; it entirely ignored my stupid love affair with the Signora, and all the thoughts of my youth—half falcons and half fledglings—still had their nest there.

My ardent melancholy and proud disdain of what I heard by my companions called love, as well as the feminine phantasms that I considered alone worthy of my regard, all these now came back to me.

If anyone had said to me then: You will entangle yourself, not through love, but weakness, with a woman who will seek you through vanity, not love; I would have replied: No, never!

And now! in truth I would not have been worthy to lie alone as poet of the mountains, in that sublime sepulchre.

They gave me a room with two windows to the north, so that by night too, the black rock, crowned with stars, confronted me with souvenirs of my pure and high-souled adolescence.

I tried to work, the inspiration of one happy verse being sometimes sufficient to rouse me from my mental prostration.

I attempted to design the plot of an idyll ; I thought of the lovely maiden, with milk-white arms, standing by the fountain at the cross roads, of the windows decked with gilly flowers ; I thought also of you, pardon, *amica mia*, you know my method of working, I take a real personage and wind poetry around it, following the model and yet hiding it from others.

That evening, however, I did not find a single firm, strong thread, I only wasted paper uselessly ; my heart sank.

Heine says, " My heart is like unto the sea " —I, insignificant poet, will only say that my heart is like a wretched lagoon, without pearls or coral, which, nevertheless, ascends and falls like the sea, every day, through its own nature and the mysterious influence of some occult power in the sky.

The next morning the letter from Geneva arrived to say that the Signora would expect me there in twelve days, we could then be alone without suspicion. Following this preamble came solemn injunctions which appeared reprimands ; she forbade me the slightest familiarity.

All this seemed to me jesuitical and distasteful, and I immediately thought I would not go,

but since I had still six days' time, I decided, according to a vicious habit of mine, to deliberate until the last moment.

Meanwhile, the old weariness and inertness came over me again and I abandoned the search of an idyll.

Neither the Italians, nor the beautiful "blonde," nor any of the other persons in the hotel interested me, and I passed my days rambling with a heavy heart about the country, sitting for long hours on the grass listening to the wind and contemplating the slow movements of the shadows.

The chestnut trees at Pellio, the meadows on the plain of Orano, the solitary gorges of Val Mara, ought to remember me. In my walks I never encountered anyone, nor did I see civilised beings except at the table d'hôte, which continued solemn and silent.

On the evening of the 1st July, at about ten o'clock, as I was reading in my room with the windows open, I heard someone play on the wretched salon piano, the opening bars of Clementi's *Gran Scena Patetica*, which I have heard you play so often.

The touch appeared excellent and I descended. An English lady was playing, and all the hotel guests were present; the salon is on the ground floor, and has a door and two windows to the front of the house; I went and sat outside in the darkness.

The night was stormy, repeated flashes of lightning, unaccompanied by thunder, lit up the black clouds and wild peaks, which, in these sudden bursts of light, appeared living; overhead the sky remained dark, and dark too remained the abyss at our feet; when the piano ceased one heard all the bells from the villages beneath in the low-lying valley.

Two ladies came out and sat at a little distance from me; I could not see them, but I recognised the rose perfume of my neighbour.

"Very fine, is it not?" she said in English. Hers was the only feminine voice that I knew up there.

There was no reply, but, after a few moments, I heard another voice say softly, "The bells."

I have always thought, yet know not how this strange thought was born in me, that the odour of *Olea fragrans* could give an idea of the sweetness of that voice.

I started and asked myself where I had heard it.

The lady of the rose essence again said something that I did not hear, and the sweet voice replied:—

"Yes, there is hope."

I had an inward inspiration; it was the voice of my dream!

I began to tremble, to tremble without

knowing why, and although the two voices spoke on, I understood nothing further.

Three or four other ladies came out of the salon, and all the party set off towards the trees.

I did not think of following them, for I had an indescribable longing to be alone, and hastening to my room, I there gave vent to my feelings, behaving like a half-demented person ; I knelt to laugh and cry, and sprang to my feet to pray, feeling God infinite and myself nothing.

From my window I stretched my arms towards the sovereign black rock, around which the lightning played, asking to be taken back into favour again, and assuring it with exultant joy that I would become worthy.

I spoke thus aloud, and then laughed at myself that I should be so excited about one whose face I had not yet seen ; it was, however, happy laughter, full of faith and without the least touch of irony. "There is hope ! there is hope !" I repeated.

And then I covered my face with my hands and thought : and she ? and she ? perhaps she also had had dreams and presentiments ? perhaps she also awaited me ? What appearance, what name would she have ?

Then the previous trembling came over me again, and I could think no more.

In one of the melancholy hours of my adoles-

cence, while wandering over the flowery hills of my country, I had foreseen for myself in the future a cold and obscure youth, and at the close of this a splendid bloom of passion, unexpected as the flower of the agave.

Now my heart cried so tumultuously, "The agave! the agave!" that I clasped both hands on it in dread.

CHAPTER IV

THAT night I had not an instant's sleep, and the following morning I was the first to enter the "salottino" adjoining the "sala da pranzo," where the English descended to drink tea between seven and nine.

During the night the idea had come to me that the sweet voice belonged to a lady whom I had seen for the first time the previous day, and who had come down to dinner with the lady of the rose perfume.

The latter came to take tea alone at half-past eight, but almost immediately after someone entered by the door to which I had my back turned and saluted her.

It was *her* voice!

Up to that moment I had been much agitated, and every step had made my heart palpitate; her voice soothed me instantly as ice stills the waves, and all became calm within me.

I was tranquil, but without other consciousness than that of the present moment.

The new-comer sat down facing her friend; she appeared about twenty-five years old, was tall and fair, had a fine, delicate physiognomy,

with two soft eyes that seemed to see little, and resembled her voice by their slightly veiled sweetness, and also by their inmost expression of intelligence. I was struck by a plain gold ring on the third finger of her left hand.

I heard her inquire for news of a disaster which had occurred on the lake during the night; a furious storm had, in fact, broken out after midnight, and a *comball* charged with sand had gone down, together with the unfortunate crew.

I alone had any information, so I seized this good opportunity, and tried to relate the affair in English.

She regarded me a little surprised, and replied in a few words of the purest Italian, thus mortifying me not a little; then, thanking me with a slight bend of the head, and an earnest, courteous glance, she resumed her conversation with her friend again.

I then went out, in a state of half-pleasurable, half-painful agitation.

It seemed to me that I was already in love; I felt that she was different from all other women, and that her beauty, almost hidden from others, would prove exquisitely rare and varied to a lover; and that her soul also had a similar veil, a similar secret.

But was she free? could she love me?

This was now my doubt and anxiety.

So also, sometimes after imagining an artistic

composition, and becoming enamoured of the idea, when I find myself pen in hand, and with a blank sheet before me, I am assailed by a thousand doubts and discouragements.

I saw her again later, sitting under the horse-chestnuts alone, reading. I went and stood a few steps from her looking through the excellent telescope which belonged to the hotel, now at the peaks of my rock, now at the villages below, now at a steamer which appeared immovable on the green water, now at the city of Lugano, where one could distinguish the people on the quay.

I only looked for the sake of remaining near her, trying to think of an excuse for addressing her.

She closed her book for a moment, and I then offered (this time in Italian) to show her the spot where the sand boat had gone down.

She accepted very courteously, and laying aside her book, rose and came to the balustrade which encircled the rampart crowned by the horse-chestnuts.

I remarked that her walk was somewhat uncertain, that her left foot dragged a little, and that perhaps her left arm also had not the vigour of the right; my heart became at once much more tender towards her, and I do not wish to fathom why, at the same time, there came to me a ray of hope.

She soon discovered that I knew the neighbourhood well, and had commenced asking me the names of the valleys and mountains, when a servant from the hotel came to say : " That the gentleman wished to see her immediately."

She started, and involuntarily a shade of annoyance passed over her face, then becoming conscious of this, she flushed slightly, and excusing herself with a polite word, departed, leaving me happier and more agitated than I can describe.

The gentleman : who was this gentleman ?

Something indefinable in her aspect and manner, the ring and tiny diamond earrings, left me little hope that she was free.

She had forgotten her book ; with much surprise I saw that it was Leopardi's poems. On the frontispiece was written crossways this name :—



I hoped that she would return, but instead the waiter came to fetch the book.

From him I learned that a week ago the lady had arrived with her husband, who had immediately fallen ill, but who was now better.

Although expecting the words "her husband," it still was a painful shock, and I had neither the wish nor the force to make any further demands.

My fervent imagination assured me that Signora Yves was not happy; her ready courtesy, and the almost evident complacence with which she had discoursed with me, told me that she was not enamoured of anyone, and this moderated my grief.

I should have liked to know the age and appearance of her husband, but refrained from asking, not so much from fear of betraying myself, as because I felt that by such questions I would offend her and lower myself.

She did not come down to dinner; in the evening there was music, and I came and went in the "sala," expecting every moment that she would appear, but she did not come, and, at about ten o'clock, discouraged, I went out to sit under the horse-chestnuts.

It was an enchanting night; the moon rising at the back left in deep shadow the place where I stood, as well as the steep promontory of the mountain, and a curved strip of lake along by the shore, while beyond, all, from the water to the sky, from the near peaks in the east, to the distant snows in the west, shone in a silvery light.

I stood by the balustrade, sighing.

"Very beautiful, is it not?"

An exclamation of surprise escaped me. It was Signora Yves who had spoken at a few paces from me.

"You!" I exclaimed.

Perhaps there was more sense in my voice than in my words; she did not reply.

"It is too beautiful here," I added; "it is almost painful."

She let this phrase also drop.

"This morning," she said, "I wished to ask you the name of that rock opposite, that I am so fond of."

"I do not know," I replied; "I do not think that it has one."

After a few moments' silence the sweet voice resumed lower, almost timidly: "You ought to give it a name, you, who are a poet."

"Then you know?" I exclaimed. "You know me?"

"Yes, Signore," she answered; "I have read your poem 'Luisa.'"

"You have read 'Luisa'!"

We were both silent for some time; a profound, delicious emotion prevented me from speaking, and she evidently had been surprised at hearing my voice so agitated.

"You see that I know you well," she resumed finally; "I wept so much over 'Luisa.' I could not believe that the writer was a man until, from an Italian here to-day, I learnt that it was really you. I believed it

was written by a young girl, a 'Luisa,' and oh! how I longed to know her."

"I also longed to know you," I murmured, the words escaping me involuntarily ; I then became immediately silent, uncertain whether or not I ought to explain them ; in the meanwhile she observed that it was late and retired.

Something in her parting salutation hurt me, and I passed a disturbed night, feeling that for one brief moment she had been very near me and then had drifted away.

She must certainly have thought my last words banal and too audacious.

I rejoiced and suffered at the same time ; it seemed to me that I had lowered myself in her opinion.

How refined and ethereal she was.

It was necessary now to quickly remove the equivocation. Towards morning I slept and dreamed that I explained all to Signora Yves, and that her sweet voice murmured : "I knew it, I knew it," but that her face was sad, very sad.

CHAPTER V

THE next morning I came down at six and awaited her in feverish expectation. This was unreasonable, for it was not probable that she would appear before half-past seven or eight.

She came at nine, but only for a moment, having probably breakfasted in her own room ; she was in walking costume and saluted me after the manner of one wishing to be courteous but not desirous of company. She then started immediately with a boy who carried a painting stool, an umbrella and a sketch-book.

The waiter told me that she was going to paint, and that the boy was to accompany her to the church of San Nazaro.

I was determined to speak to her, no matter what her wishes on the subject might be ; so, half an hour afterwards, I set out in the direction of San Nazaro.

With what an agitated heart, with what confused thoughts and numbed limbs I took that walk !

Absorbed in the feeling that I must speak decisive words, I went forward, carried along by instinct and paying no heed to the way ; I

heard and saw nothing save the voices and images of my mind.

At a few minutes walk from San Nazaro, I met the boy, who said to me spontaneously : "The lady is below near the church."

I do not know whether he believed me the husband or someone else ; to me it seemed like a voice from the same Unknown who had sent me the dreams.

Signora Yves sat sketching in a meadow a short distance from the road ; she raised her head, saw me, and continued to draw. I descended the field slowly, and stopped a few paces from her.

She looked at me again, returned my salute with a smile, and resumed her work in silence ; I did not yet know well how to read the unspoken words wrapped up in her smiles ; I felt, however, that in this one a sting lay concealed.

I drew nearer and spoke a little about the Lombardian church that she was drawing. Her tone was affable but indifferent, as, replying to a phrase of mine on the picturesque appearance the church presented, all enveloped in its homely antiquity, she said : "I have been fortunate in my choice ; if you are now going in search of poetry, I wish you the same good luck."

She wanted me to go, but I did not wish to leave her thus. In the silence that followed

one heard the low murmuring of the rivulet which flowed down the meadow.

"Hear the poetry calling," I said. "Poetry is here."

I saw Signora Yves knit her brows; she did not reply and drew hastily, her eyes coming and going rapidly from the church to the drawing-book.

"Does it not seem poetry to you?" I resumed.

"Yes," she replied, a little nervously; "and I am glad not to know where this pure poetry passes, because it is perhaps through some very ignoble channel."

"Signora," I said then, "I fear that last night you did not properly understand some words of mine."

"I do not know which ones you mean," she replied tranquilly. "I don't pay so much attention to words! And you think it would be a misfortune if I had misunderstood them?"

"Yes, Signora."

Signora Yves gave a little silvery laugh and said: "That is too Italian for me."

"I said to you," I resumed, unheeding her irony, "that I had longed to know you, and you, perhaps, took the words for an idle compliment. I do not pay compliments; I wished to know you, solely because, many years ago, I heard your voice without seeing your face."

She raised her head abruptly from the drawing, and regarded me in surprise.

Her soul was no longer closed to me, I could see it in the depths of her eyes, while she said : "Where did you hear me?"

"It matters little," I replied. "I was only annoyed that my words, spoken unthinkingly, should have been taken for an impertinence. Now, if you will excuse me, I shall leave you to sketch in peace."

So I took my departure, feeling my advantage and not wishing to lose it. I saw that, for a moment, she was tempted to detain me, but did not do so.

I went to meditate over my little victory in the shade of the neighbouring valley, recalling to mind the peculiar fascination of her face and voice as she had made her ironical responses.

I could not think that she was not free ; it seemed to me that loving me she would become so, and at this thought I clasped my hands on my breast, which, in truth, was too confined for such great joy and already ached.

Feeling the need of exhausting myself, I took a long walk through the woods and valleys, stepping forward in wild exultation, as if carried along by gusts of wind, smiling at myself, and mocking with gay tenderness the dear, dull plants and stones that did not understand anything of the love which then inspired me.

A few steps from the hotel, where I arrived late, I met Signora Yves giving her arm to a pale, thin gentleman, evidently an invalid.

It was easy to guess who he was. Tall and upright, he looked about fifty years old ; his face was sad and hard with a fixed, intensely inimical expression.

She bowed, but the husband gave no sign of having seen me. For three days I had no further opportunity of speaking to Signora Yves ; she was always with her convalescent, walking a little, and sitting long hours under the horse-chestnuts.

She saluted me with her serious gentleness, but made no effort to speak to me, neither did I try to speak with her. Our eyes, however, met not unfrequently, and it seemed to me that it pleased her to find herself near me ; even the greater reserve which the husband's presence now imposed on us seemed to me full of sweetness.

Sometimes she read a paper aloud to him. I then feigned to read another, and placed myself sufficiently near to be able to hear her. When she became aware of my presence, I felt it for a moment in her voice.

The beautiful lady of the rose perfume often spoke amicably with Signora Yves, and exchanged a few words with the taciturn husband, and I endeavoured to become intimate with her for the sake of hearing something, even

indirectly, of Signora Yves ; but as a glance from the latter led me to believe that this was displeasing to her, I was only too glad thenceforward to avoid the lady.

Signore Yves had the last room in the west wing on the second story, with the adjoining terrace.

In the evening she generally remained with her husband in the reading-room until nine o'clock, when they went up together.

I then used to go outside, taking with me the treasure of her parting salutation, and remain there as long as there was light in the little windows.

It seemed to me sometimes that I distinguished her figure on her terrace, but my shortsightedness, and the shadow of the woods which descended from the mountain to the hotel, left me always in doubt.

How painful it was for me when the light disappeared from the windows, and how my heart and imagination tormented me, I do not wish even to remember.

My condition was ever varying, in an incessant alternation between delight and pain, in which I became more and more attached to her, and felt always more that she was thinking of me.

In the meadow of San Nazaro we had parted with a cold salute. I had not spoken a word with her since ; and yet, after three days, it

seemed to me that the next time we should be alone together we should speak as lovers.

In the afternoon of the fourth day I met her on the hotel stairs. She saluted me so calmly that for the moment all my dreams fell to the ground, then smiling, she asked me why I avoided her.

I protested that I had only kept at a distance because I saw that she was occupied with her husband, and I had not wished to be indiscreet. Signora Yves blushed deeply, and replied that she knew it, and had spoken in jest. She added that she wished to ask me something about my books, and also about some other Italian works. We arranged to meet at five under the horse-chestnut trees.

CHAPTER VI

I WAS in a fever of impatience, and at half-past four was already at the rendezvous.

I expected that she would come alone, because her husband had passed a bad night and had remained in bed, and alone she did come, a few eternal minutes after five.

She had on an elegant blue costume, trimmed with black lace at neck and breast, and wore a necklace and earrings of small gold Roman coins. Never had her face appeared so delicate, nor her throat so pure in form and whiteness.

In her hand she held the volume of Leopardi.

I thought it right to inquire immediately after her husband. She blushed again and replied so low that I could not hear.

She wished to know whether the "Luisa" of my story was a real person. I replied that she was not, though her traits and colouring had been in great part drawn from real people.

This method she could not understand; it seemed to her that there must necessarily emanate from it a creation without individuality, vague and false as a whole.

She acquiesced, however, in my reasoning,

that in nature it is also so, and each of us resembles some other person by some line or colour ; and that the blending together of these lines and colours is precisely the most delicate and difficult work of an artist, who, out of these common notes, has to create a harmony with various dissonances, and an air quite its own.

" It is true," she said. " I had not thought of that. But do you believe that one could really find a ' Luisa ' ? that there exists a person really incapable of loving twice under any circumstances whatsoever ? "

" Yes, Signora."

" I do not ; I have a hundred times less faith in the ideal than you."

Her voice was subdued and full of such profound bitterness, that I was sadly mute.

I broke silence soon, however, attacking instinctively the argument where I felt there was a shadow and a peril, saying that though there is a sublime poetry in those gentle, submissive creatures, endowed with little fantasy but much constancy, who love once only, there are equally noble natures, with such impulsive hearts that they easily wound themselves in their flight, and losing, as it were, all sense of love and faith, lie as though dead, like eagles struck by lightning, till, after a time, they stir, they rise, they soar again. These, I said, are natures rich in vital

energy, strong of will and of winged imagination, which, had they met, would have loved but once ; impetuous, powerful natures, that love as the sky loves the earth in the storms of spring-time, that melt in another soul the very inmost frost and bring forth all the life, verdure and blossom.

Signora Yves regarded me in silence.

Do I not speak from the dead, and can I not tell the truth without regard for human respect? I drank out of her searching gaze an intoxicating admiration.

Only in this matter of vanity, *amica mia*, was I ever truly a poet; before loving as I now love I had doubts of Paradise, not seeing how one could have admiration there, or be happy without it.

It seemed to me that this searching gaze also asked--Is it really so? have you experienced it?

She did not make any comment, and opened the volume of Leopardi's poems.

"I wished to ask you something about Leopardi also," she said, turning over the leaves; "I am so fond of Leopardi. And you, do you like Leopardi or Manzoni best?"

"Leopardi."

"Oh, you also; how glad I am! Is it not true that he is the greater?"

"No, he is not at all as great, but I like him more."

"Ah," she said, closing the book, "I do not understand that ; explain to me what you mean?"

I did so.

"Excuse me," she said, without pronouncing her opinion. "You, who have spoken of noble natures, will you tell me what you think of these lines ?"

She searched for "Ginestra" in the volume, and made me read the lines that begin thus :—

"Thrice noble he
By Fate's decree
Nowise unstrung,
Who fearless will outspeaking own
Frankly the wrong
Inherited, for which he must atone."¹

"I think," I replied, "that I would have liked to embrace Leopardi, and weep with him, and say to him : What a poet you are, and how blind ! Who has inspired you with this noble nature which you so strongly and grandly oppose to the malignant mother of men ? the same malignant mother ? No. Have you then created yourself ? No, no. But then you must have had a benignant donor and this fount of goodness, who is it ? Do

¹ The versifier notes an unfortunate misprint in the sixteenth edition before him. Leopardi's line should read, "Gli occhi mortali contra," but "immortali" has been printed in error.

you know why such a gift has been given to you? what is expected from you? what is being prepared for you? See all your black philosophy falls."

"How happy you ought to be," said Signora Yves, "to think thus; I cannot. I cannot even believe that a noble nature *is* a benefit, and then I do not believe in the stability of any human sentiment; people have said to me of Leopardi that even he feared to die."

I observed, rather sadly, that I did not see how, when she had these ideas, my verses could please her.

"Oh, yes," she said, "they do please me very much. I like to be able to dream that you are right, and that there are really beings with sentiments such as you write of; I should like, at least, to be certain that you believe it. I should also like to persuade myself that men are not as petty and despicable as they appear to me, and that life is worth something, worth, at least the trouble of being continued in this or another world.

I had hung on her words, eager to penetrate the secret of her heart, and it seemed to me that they revealed a past of impetuous love and deadly pain and a present of ice and silence, but with the first apparent signs of second life. When she had finished speaking, I regarded her silently, not as a lover, but rather as an inquiring, dubious physician.

She coloured slightly, and said, "What are you thinking about me?"

"That you are ill, and should not read Leopardi."

"You would be a severe physician," she replied smilingly. "You have seen that I do not read only Leopardi, but also godly books of good renown, like yours."

I replied that, in taking poison, it mattered little to take it with wine, soup, or coffee.

I then spoke to her of the passionate worship I had formerly for Leopardi, of the morbid melancholies I then had, of the sepulchre that I had chosen.

Signora Yves listened with intense attention, I had the idea that she studied me, as, a little before, I had studied her.

Then she wished to regard my rock through the telescope which I arranged for her. In placing her eye at the glass she lost the right direction and, as we sought it together, our hands touched : she did not immediately withdraw hers and a delicious thrill went through me.

"I could not mount on your sepulchre," she said, smiling.

I was on the point of asking if, when I were dead, she would bring me a flower, but I was too agitated and did not know how to say it.

Signora Yves asked me if it would not

still please me to be buried up there. I replied that in that moment I did not know myself.

I was always in expectation of her asking me to explain what I had said about her voice, but the question did not come then.

Instead she asked me if I had composed verses on the sepulchre rock, and, on hearing that I had not, appeared surprised and said I ought to write some.

Immediately I promised to do so; and though neither said it, we both quite understood that they would be for her.

After some moments of silence she murmured: "I should like to have a souvenir of this place."

My heart contracted with sudden anguish and I asked her if she expected to leave soon.

"Yes," Signora Yves replied in a gently regretful tone, "I think we shall leave immediately that it is possible. We are not satisfied with the air."

Emotion deprived me of speech; the only too natural idea that they might leave had never occurred to me; it had seemed as if things ought ever to continue thus.

She remarked, I think, the effect of her words and sought to mitigate it by asking me finally, in a low tone, where I had heard her voice.

This simple question gave me in that moment infinite pleasure.

"In dreams," I replied.

She turned pale and did not say a word; she reopened Leopardi but I do not think that she read. There was a long silence.

At length I resumed palpitatingly: "I heard your voice twice in dreams, the first time was many years ago, the second only a few months past. In these dreams I was very unhappy, very wretched, and your voice was life and hope; out of dreams I have also, through my own fault, been very unhappy, and I have always had such a strong faith that I would meet the living voice, the living person—"

Some ladies came in our direction and I had to approach my face near that of Signora Yves and feign to read in her book to hear the whisper of her reply—"I have not even for myself either life or hope."

The other ladies sat down near us and further speech was impossible, perhaps also we were both too agitated to be able to speak.

Her hands trembled and her breast and shoulders rose and fell. And I? I do not know what aspect I had; there was certainly a tumult in my heart and a mist before my eyes.

A servant came to inform Signora Yves that the gentleman wished to see her before

dinner. She waited a little and then rose ; I accompanied her in silence to the entrance of the hotel.

"I should like to say something to you," she murmured before leaving me, "but I do not think that I should have the courage."

"Why," I exclaimed anxiously.

She did not respond to this "why," but saluted me with exquisite grace and lifted her eyes for a moment to my forehead.

Several other times, during these three days, she had regarded my forehead. Why? It pleased and disturbed me at the same time; it was as if she preferred me to myself. Is this possible? I do not know; I felt it so.

CHAPTER VII

I WENT in to dinner at the first sound of the bell, although I was not in a state to be able to touch food.

Signora Yves came in late, towards the end of the meal ; she exchanged some words with Mrs B——, the lady of the rose perfume, and then all at once looked at me, as if fearing that I had overheard, but I had taken advantage of their conversation to contemplate her unobserved and had been so absorbed in her face, her delicate hands and in the music of her voice, that I had not paid attention to the sense of her words.

She regarded me a few more times, but less perhaps than the previous day. Directly dinner was over she disappeared and came down again half an hour afterwards.

Her friend proposed a short walk ; she had perhaps seen us speaking together before dinner, for passing by me she said amiably : " Will you come ? "

Signora Yves did not speak or give any sign, nevertheless, I accepted directly, and we went together along the picturesque path that leads through the chestnut groves to Lanzo.

Mrs B—— talked a great deal, but only in English, which I found difficult to speak, and very difficult to understand ; she corrected me amiably.

Signora Yves was very silent, nor did I know how to turn the conversation to her ; there was moreover in our silence a secret understanding that seemed to me far sweeter than an indifferent dialogue.

She soon showed signs of fatigue, and we sat down on the grass at the foot of a chestnut tree.

Below the circle of dark woods that clothed the mountains, the meadows and golden corn-fields gleamed on the plateau which lay open from the mountain ridges opposite, cloudy in the evening light, away, away, to the profound serenity of the east.

Mrs B—— spoke on and on about Florence where she had passed the winter, I did not listen, nor did Signora Yves.

It seemed to me that our thoughts were united, and that she felt as I did the soft poetry of the hour and scene ; our eyes now met more often ; mine asked clearly : "Do you love me ?" and hers replied, "Yes."

Returning, I gave her my arm, our companion preceded us by a few steps ; I went slowly, the contact, perfume and warmth of her dear person were so delicious.

I begged her passionately to tell me what

she had not dared before ; afterwards Violet related to me that in that moment my eyes had scintillated.

"I cannot," she said, "I still do not dare, I do not believe that I shall ever dare. Perhaps I might write it."

"Need I fear this secret?" I asked. "Will it deprive me of hope? of life?"

Her arm trembled and her hand moved convulsively as if electrified. "You must not lose anything through me," she replied, in a tremulous voice, "I hope that you will meet another freer and more worthy than I am. I fear to have been culpable that you should feel thus and say such things, but it was a very sweet fault, and then, we must part so soon and for ever. You related to me that you had dreamed, and it seems to me that I live in a dream, that I am, and yet am not, the same person as before—you know the feeling one has in dreams sometimes?"

Our path took us by the stables of the donkeys that were usually hired by the guests at the Hotel Belvedere, and Mrs B—— stopped to chat with the proprietor ; we passed on.

"Now," resumed Violet, when we were at a sufficient distance, "I realise that I must write this thing to you ; it is not a secret, but it is something that you do not know and that you should know. Your book 'Luisa' made a profound impression upon me, more than I

have up to this told you, and it would grieve me very much, not only for you to forget me, but also for you to think of me as it is not necessary that you should—for your sympathy is very dear to me. I leave soon and there will not be any further occasion to explain matters."

A deadly chill came over me. I had scarcely the force to reply that never, never should I forget her and that now indeed I desired to be buried on the rock, the sooner the better.

Her hand closed spasmodically on my arm.
"No!" she cried, "I do not wish it! I do not wish it!"

At this point Mrs B—— rejoined us and did not leave us till the hotel; Signora Yves ascended at once to her rooms and I hastened to shut myself up in mine.

One moment I was in despair, the next the joy of being loved burned within me.

"No!" Violet had cried, "I do not wish it!"

I seized my pen and wrote:—

I

"Had I thy love, my choice should be
 No cross nor stone.
A lonely grave known but to thee,
 To thee alone.

2

"Naught should the coming age behold,
 Nor slander ween.
It should but say a lady cold,
 Cold as Undine.

3

"To torrents' roar and rushing stream
She gives her heart.
On mossy bank she lies supreme,
Alone, apart.

4

"Beloved! the murmur of the stream
My voice should be.
One life-long kiss as in a dream
Murmuring for thee.

5

"From fair green moss, where thou more fair
Didst soft recline.
Our whispered love should fill the air,
Thy love and mine.

6

"I'd be in the scented Cyclamen's flower,
Scent dear to thee.
In sunbeams which glance at the noontide hour
Through leaf and tree.

7

"I'd be in the heavens regarding thine eye,
Regarding above.
In the whistling of wind my spirit should fly,
Fly to my love."

When I had finished these verses I repeated them over a hundred times, standing at the window and regarding my rock illuminated by the moon.

I purposed offering them to her next morning ; I would have liked, however, that she could have had them immediately ; I imagined, excitedly, that she would be moved by them, and that she would yield to love.

Where was then the memory of my dream, of the dark abyss and the salutary force that drew me out of it ? I no longer remembered it ; I did not think of obstacles known or mysterious, legitimate or illegitimate ; I only thought of her delicate face, her graceful figure, her voice, her hand that had left a perfume on my arm, and of the unknown depths of her intelligent, melancholy spirit, full of occult passion.

It was but another abyss towards which I was extending heart and limbs, an abyss worse than the first, because such a love, if responded to, would have borne no restraint. God's hand was, however, already over me guiding me back to the right way, but I did not know it, walking in darkness, full of error, in order that I may one day give praise for my salvation to Him alone.

The next morning I descended early, and was much surprised to find Signora Yves writing in the reading-room.

While she gave me her hand my eyes interrogated her as to what she was writing.

"Yes," she said, in a faint voice ; she smiled, but she was ["]very pale.

I placed my verses in a closed envelope by her, saying, "The poetry."

At first she did not understand, it seemed as if she did not remember; then she exclaimed, "Oh," her eyes shone, and she immediately opened the envelope.

She read and re-read, each time lifting her sweet eyes and resting them on mine with an ineffaceable expression, finally she put down the verses, and, throwing herself back in the arm-chair, looked at me.

I had never seen a similar regard, so intense, so glassy, so terrified, and so passionate.

Love, pain and fear, that regard said all with long, dreadful fixedness: then suddenly its intensity faded.

Signora Yves said "Thanks" and returned to her writing.

As I still remained standing before her, she raised her head a little and gave me a faint smile; I understood and retired to the adjoining room to wait.

I think I had been there about half an hour when I heard Violet rise, I then returned to her to know my fate.

She held one hand over her eyes and in the other had the letter, which she gave me, speaking in a hushed tone, in English, and almost sobbing—"Forgive me! be kind to me!" Then she went out, without my daring to detain her.

She had written thus :—

“ I am not Signora Yves as you suppose, I have no husband, the gentleman accompanying me is my uncle. This is no secret, someone here imagined, without any reason in the world, unless perhaps because of my ring, that we were husband and wife, and we have left it so.

“ I cannot however, let you remain under such an error ; I feel that it might be harmful to you, and, therefore, also to me. At the same time it is very painful and difficult for me to tell you this simple thing.

“ We only met for the first time a few days ago, but the knowledge we have of one another is of much older date. You have spoken to me of a dream ; I also knew you in a sort of dream, last year, in Rome, when I read ‘ Luisa.’

“ My mind, which is much more tranquil and positive than yours, fears to wander a little in thinking of the circumstances in which I read it.

“ For some years previously I had felt as though I had no heart, as though it were frozen and no longer felt the cold ; in the spring of last year, however, I began to again feel some sensibility, and to have hours of a soft melancholy.

“ One day, it was the 24th April, I went about sunset to the Protestant cemetery at

Porto San Paolo, which I had not visited before.

"The camelias and azalias were in flower and the old walls with the wild grass, yellow roses and groups of cypresses, looked very beautiful in the setting sun.

"Close by the memorial stone to Percy Bysshe Shelley, I found in the grass a book with the title 'Luisa.' Perhaps some gentlemen, who went out as I entered, had lost it.

"I opened it and my eyes fell on the passage which alludes to the 'Legend of the Delight,' that I regret not to be better acquainted with. I do not even know which people it belongs to.

"It made on me, partly, perhaps, because of the place and hour, such an impression, and I felt so suddenly that my heart was again living, that I became alarmed and troubled, not wishing this to be.

"I replaced the book quickly where I had found it, but as I went out the custodian brought it after me, thinking I had lost it, and it was with difficulty that I persuaded him to the contrary.

"Three days after, a friend, whom I had asked for some modern Italian work, brought me 'Luisa.' It seemed to me that I was being persecuted by it, and I wished to refuse it, saying I did not want verses; but my friend insisted, and I gave in.

"I read 'Luisa' in one night; it was like one of those dreams from which one awakes weeping.

"It did not seem to me possible that the author was not a woman, but I did not wish to attach importance to this, although I was perhaps not indifferent; I endeavoured instead to discern whether or not the writer believed in all this idealism.

"I tried to persuade myself that he did not, and that the poet was as false as the story.

"All the same I could not forget the book nor overcome the desire to know who had written it.

"My desire was gratified here; you expressed very promptly for me a sympathy which surprised and, I confess, at first displeased me, because it seemed to me a sort of French courtesy, quite insincere; I did not believe anything else possible.

"For a moment it appeared to me as if this was a punishment for not having listened to my reason, which told me to keep at a distance from the author of 'Luisa,' and for having asked him if he believed in his work, thus admitting that such a faith were possible.

"I am still very profoundly and sadly sceptical of human nature, but I do not wish now to think that your sympathy is not in this moment quite sincere. If it is painful

and difficult for me to tell you that I am simply Signorina Yves, it is because such words from me will perhaps make you imagine what is not possible.

"I am affianced, and my fate is to live in a little city far beyond the Alps, with a person whom I know and esteem sufficiently to have consented to this union, in which besides, I do not look for, nor do I believe that I can offer happiness.

"You have just brought me your poetry.

"That I am touched, deeply touched by it, you have seen! I ask God why we were not brought together many years ago when, perhaps, we could have been happy.

"All the same, I am glad, in a certain melancholy fashion, of even so tardy and brief a meeting.

"Although I do not believe in the stability of human feelings, I believe, nevertheless, that the memory can preserve indefinitely the perfume of dissevered affections.

"You will find this language cold and hard; I have, indeed, learned it in a school much harder, much colder and much bitterer than I would know how or would wish to relate.

"At present our desire to know one another can yield no fruit except pain, the usual fruit of desire!

"Time will, however, remedy this for both you and me, and will leave, in place of the

wound, barely a slight sensation, intermittent according to the winds and rain.

" You will not have the idle comfort of my coming to weep over your sepulchre.

" You will live, I ardently hope, very much longer than I, who am so useless, and you will make known, for the consolation of many, and also, I know, for the sake of the salutary example, all the good that you believe is in the human heart.

" And even should there only result from this some trifling good work some fugitive generous thought, those who have not your faith must still confess that illusion, mist though it be, can sometimes condense itself into a drop, and falling upon a blade of grass, restore it.

" You are waiting for me to finish, and I must also hasten, because it is time for me to return to my uncle.

" Your sentiment honours and touches me so much, that I must be entirely sincere with you.

" I have of my own free will affianced myself to a man whom I esteem, but greater difficulties than this prevent my allowing my heart to love another.

" Past events have deprived me of happiness for this life, as also of rendering others happy.

" Why should I not tell you? You know how to divine so much! I have already

loved, loved too much. At twenty-five years I feel as though I were fifty ; I ought to consider every new movement of my heart as despicable weakness, as folly.

" Farewell. I have considered for a moment whether I might add 'my friend' whether I might respond, at least with these innocent words to your flight of fancy, but have decided against them.

" I said inwardly that it is more prudent to content ourselves with what we have already had—an hour of spiritual contact and sympathy.

" Friendly relations, or correspondence, might perhaps not be good for us in the future, might only render our position more difficult ; we shall thus conserve purer and more poetic the remembrance of this hour.

" I leave the day after to-morrow, perhaps even to-morrow.

" Farewell, again. Forgive me, and do not, supplicate you, seek to make more difficult for me what my reason and will recognise as necessary.

" I thank you for the verses, which will never leave me.

" God bless you in all that you do, in all that you love. VIOLET YVES."

CHAPTER VIII

HER words, “ Forgive me! be kind to me ! ” had filled my heart with icy dread.

On opening the letter I had exulted at the first lines and then read rapidly, devouring the embittering phrases with avidity, wishing to know the worst.

When I had finished, hot passion and a fever of overpowering life raged within me.

She was free, she loved me, she also had dreamed of me !

For the first time in my life finished verses burst from my heart ; the first, it is true appears insensate and the last contains a serious imperfection, but I shall not change them.

“ Behold, uprises proud the agave flower,
In glorious heaven my sun reflects its power ;
My soul intoxicate with flame and light,
Spreads pinions wide and storm-tossed wends its flight.

If long and bitter was the darksome shade,
This hour of bliss for suffering has repaid ”

•
No, my heart, be tranquil, I shall not change them ; your first jet of infinite, eternal joy will not be retouched !

She was affianced, she had lost faith in love, in men, perhaps also in herself ; such difficulties inflamed instead of alarming me, but ah ! Yes, it was painful to read that she had loved so much that she could not live down the past.

For a long time I remained buried in the armchair where Signorina Yves had sat ; then, expecting her, I went from one "sala" to another, rambling round the hotel.

I don't know what people must have thought of me ; I caught myself sometimes staring fixedly at them and speaking aloud.

Hours and hours passed and still Signorina Yves did not come ; I would have written to her but feared that, in the meantime, she might descend and escape me.

Towards dinner hour, however, I resolved to hastily write a few lines in the reading-room.

I wrote :—

"I do not wish to die, no, not if you love me ; if you are free I do not wish for a sepulchre on the mountain or in the valley. I wish for you who are hope and faith, life and light ; I wish to bear you on my breast, strong with you, strong for you, through things and men, friends and enemies, to God.

"Do not speak to me of engagements, or of events that are passed. I shall love you so that you will believe in Idealism as I believe in it, and we shall be as united as the two were

in the sublime 'Legend of the Delight,' which is Islamite and runs thus :—

'A pilgrim soul from the Earth arrives at the dwelling of Delight and knocks at the entrance.

'From within a voice demands, "Who art thou?" and the soul answering says, "I am I."

"There is not room," says the voice, "there is no room here for thee and me."

'The entrance remains closed.

'So the soul descends again to Earth and passes a year in the desert, praying, fasting and doing penance.

'Then she remounts to the entrance and knocks again.

'When the voice asks, "Who art thou?" she replies, trembling, "I am thou," and the entrance opens.'

"What intense sweetness, *I am thou!*

"May you feel these words, written throb-bingly here by me, more strongly than when you read them first, where God led you to find them, close by Shelley's silent heart and the funereal roses.

"I have the firm faith that our lips will be able to say them one day.

"You do not know my history, you do not know my dreams, you do not know the fate, no, not the fate, rather the infinite love that will have pity on us; and you say that you are leaving and that you do not wish for friendship or correspondence of any sort with me. Oh, how little you know, how far you are from understanding, and what an error it is to say that you have loved too much!

"Wherever you go there I shall also go.

"You have not loved enough."

Signorina Yves' "Leopardi" was in the reading-room, and I put my letter inside it.

The book had a faint perfume, the perfume of her hands and person which made me dizzy.

A few moments after it had rung for dinner she came down in an elegant black costume, wearing long turquoise earrings, that suited her well in contrast to the fair braids of hair and delicate white neck.

She was accompanied by Mrs B., but, as I might not have another opportunity, I offered the book.

Precisely because the moment was inopportune she understood; I saw her hesitate a moment.

"I cannot carry it in to dinner," she said, with a slight smile.

"No," I replied, "but I think you have forgotten something of yours in it."

Violet still hesitated, then, taking the book, she drew out the letter.

"Let us go," said the other.

During dinner Signorina Yves only once turned her eyes towards me; she rose from table before dessert and disappeared.

Was she impatient to read my letter? or did she wish to avoid me? I followed her in thought; she was reading, she had read it,

she was combating with the shadows in her heart.

Weighty moment! would she or the antagonistic fantasms conquer? It was hard not to know anything, not to be able to have even a sign.

She had, at all events, taken the letter; I said to myself that it was wrong of me to doubt and fear, for that God would not have mocked me by sending me those dreams, and then Violet, only to afterwards deprive me of everything thus.

I sat opposite the sovereign rock, and mentally brought to a conclusion the poetry that had burst from my heart in the morning:—

“ If long and bitter was the darksome shade,
This hour of bliss for suffering has repaid,
Within my breast, impetuous, unsubdued,
Glows the fierce passion of a youth renewed.

“ Sublime is God who wills my mortal days,
Yet to my love intenser strength conveys,
Blest loved one, ruler of my destiny!
As clouds to heaven, ascends my love for thee.”

I felt that, happy or not, I should love till death, and in this consciousness there was an acute ecstasy.

In my hours of greatest mental exaltation the thought of death has always shone before me, but in different forms: in the emotion that an intense feeling for nature has given me,

especially when this is mingled with occult bitterness, I have longed for oblivion; in emotion caused by love I have desired a more elevated world, the world of light and life that I felt in my heart, so different, so superior to all earthly life and light.

That evening Signorina Yves did not come down again.

CHAPTER IX

AT dawn next morning I heard wheels stop before the hotel ; a suspicion struck me and I sprang to the window.

I saw below a carriage and waggon, and near the latter a pile of luggage that the porters were already packing ; when they had finished a lady and gentleman came out of the hotel, followed by the proprietor and waiters ; I immediately recognised Signorina Yves.

I stood by the window stupefied, looking on as though it were an ordinary departure and of no importance to me. I do not think, however, that I could have moved or spoken.

Violet helped her uncle into the carriage and wrapped him well up in cloaks and rugs ; then she disappeared for a moment under the horse-chestnuts, and as she returned, raised her eyes towards my window before taking her place beside her uncle ; then all saluted and the carriage started.

People say it is pleasant to recall past misery in happier days. In my happiest hours it has always hurt me to think on that one. My thoughts still fly back there sometimes and immediately a tremor comes over me, I feel

a weight on my heart, and I say to myself, "No! no!"

It is not alone my voice that speaks thus within me. I would not listen to it perhaps if it were; it is also the voice of my Beloved, and it seems to me that there are tears in the sweet voice.

Dear one, I know how it grieves you to remember all that I suffered because of your resistance, and I shall listen to your "No!" now, even as when you said it straining yourself to me in an agonising embrace: I shall not describe those moments.

She had left a letter for me.

If, lost in the shades of blackest night, I had seen the sun rise suddenly above the horizon, it could not have made more effect on me than the sight of the well-known handwriting did.

Need I say how my heart beat, and how my trembling hands scarcely succeeded in opening the envelope.

Violet wrote:—

"You did not listen to me, you have made me suffer greatly, and you see it has been in vain.

"Now I must make you suffer, although God knows that I have no desire to make any living creature suffer, and that in this I would not distinguish between those who wish me good or evil.

"When you read those lines I shall be far away; if you love me, do not follow me, you would lose my sympathy and esteem.

"Oh, I do not know how to express the intensity of this wish of mine!

"I will imagine that we are still together and that I ask you for your word. If I ask it with affection in my voice, and tears in my eyes, will you refuse me? No, I feel that I clasp your hand and that you reply, 'Yes, I promise.'

"You say that I do not know your history, your dreams and destiny. But, ah! and you then?—Do you know my history, my destiny?

"You say that you would make me believe in the Ideal: I believe in it already, only it does not exist on this earth, it is elsewhere, and it is a terrible error to look for it here.

"You imagine that I am your ideal, and that you would be happy with me. *I* am equally convinced that you deceive yourself.

"You have dreamed, yes, that I believe, and you are still dreaming.

"Have you even looked at me properly? I know it would not now cool your sentiment; but tell me, have you even considered my infirmity?

"You are a poet: you respond 'Yes,' and that you even love me more because of it; but would it be always so? It is, besides, not on

account of my infirmity, or, at least, not chiefly because of it, that I combat my heart.

" You are a poet : otherwise how could you have loved me in so short a time ? I have known you so much longer.

" My voice for you (I dare to speak thus !) and your poetry for me are perhaps like a music, which, though causing us to feel real joy and real sorrow, is without substance, and, when it ceases, so do these transitory sentiments also cease.

" The sublime legend of the Delight is not for us ; be consoled, if you can, by the thought that it is not for any other mortal couple either, unless for a few fugitive moments that afterwards are expiated.

" The Delight, the Being, to whom one says : ' I am thou,' is in the mysterious dwelling, is not seen, never has been seen !

" Only in a cold, bitter sense can men say one to the other—' I am thou.' It means : ' See, I am weak and ignorant, I love, err, and suffer like you.'

" You ask me, and I consent, to leave you my Leopardi in souvenir ; you will find it in the reading-room.

" Besides your verses, my souvenir of these days will be, not to have, or to read, this book any more in compliance with your wish.

" I have in truth an intense sympathy with Leopardi's sadness, which is of the same hue

as mine, though not of the same substance : I believe much more than he does in what is beyond our world, and less in what is human in myself.

"Write, combat for what seems to you good and true.

"The voice so dear to you will not be heard amongst those redounding to your fame, nor yet in the midst of earthly pleasures which must be abjured, praying and fasting in the desert, before knocking at the mysterious entrance.

"I should like that you would find my voice within the dwelling of Delight.

"VIOLET YVES."

I spent all that day on the heights of Piano d'Orano, listening to the wind and regarding the clouds.

I did not dine at table d'hôte, because, in spite of me, my eyes filled every moment with tears.

I resolved to procure all possible information about Signorina Yves in the hotel and then leave.

Not to follow her. I felt that I could not, ought not do that. In the evening, as I stood leaning against the door where for the first time I had heard her voice, I smelt the well-known rose perfume.

The remembrance of that happy moment, and of the last walk, came back with such violence that I would have retired, but Mrs B.

observed me and asked in her petulant little voice why I fled from her.

She then spoke to me of Violet; it was fortunately dark, and she could not see my face.

She eulogised Signorina Yves, whom she called her friend, and laughed at me because I had believed her married; the ring appeared a wedding one, but was not in reality quite plain.

She was only engaged, and, in fact, did not seem at all in love with her fiancé.

Her father was English and her mother Italian; Violet herself had been born in Italy; she had lost her parents in infancy, and now lived with three paternal uncles established for commercial reasons at Nuremberg in Bavaria.

The uncle now with her was the head of the family and was travelling for his health; they were to pass the rest of the summer in Rome or Naples, as the marriage, for some reason which Mrs B. ignored, could not take place for another year.

A visit from the fiancé was expected in the month of August. Her slight physical imperfection was the result of a violent fever she had had in childhood.

More than this Mrs B. could not tell me, neither the name of the fiancé, nor whether Violet had any other attachment.

It was, however, already a great deal for me to know where she lived, although the appellation of "little town" did not seem to me to suit Nuremberg ; above all, it was much to know that she would be free for another year.

That same evening I wrote to the Signora in Geneva that her counsels were wise and just, and that I asked pardon for having merited them ; that I had decided not to come to Geneva on account of a great change which had taken place within me ; I personally could not claim any merit for this change, but I was confident that it was for our mutual peace and good. I added that I was leaving Lanzo to travel, and that, as I did not yet quite know where I would go, I could not give her any address.

Next morning I went to San Nazaro and bade farewell to the meadow, falling water and little Lombardian church drawn by Violet ; I then went to salute the old chestnut tree at the foot of which we had sat, and finally I said farewell to my rock and departed.

I remember that during the journey I held Leopardi's poems continuously in my hands, and that once opening it, I read :—

" Illusions vanished, fled,
There shall I rest my head,
My tired heart " . . .

And that then I kissed the book ; it seemed

to me almost as if the poet in his deadly desolation united our two souls.

At the same time the faint perfume of the book, which spoke of her infinite refinement, and also of her sadness, spoke besides a sweet language of flowers, incomprehensible yet consoling.

CHAPTER X

I HAD indeed conceived the idea of travelling, but soon abandoned it and retired to our place in the country, where, as my brother and sister-in-law were at the sea, and, as you know, we have no neighbours, I found myself quite alone, as was my desire.

On the very evening of my arrival I wrote to Violet; although beginning the letter, I did not well know where to direct it, or even whether it were opportune to write so soon

The stars and an inner voice said to me, Write! write! but I had hardly taken my pen in hand before fresh doubts assailed me and caused me to pause hesitatingly. Finally the contending storms within me of "Yes" and "No" burst forth in one furious stream that my pen could scarce keep pace with.

I told her of my doubts and fears, of the voice of the stars which in that moment looked down on both her and me, and of the all-powerful inner inspiration.

I said that if I had been able to accomplish the sacrifice of not following her, it was solely because of the perfect faith I had that God

would unite us—I confess *now* that my faith sometimes underwent terrifying eclipses!—and endeavoured to explain to her the course that love had taken in me after our separation; how it had obscured every sentiment in my soul except that of the Divinity, with which it mingled itself, because she, Violet, was a word from God, whispered to me in the darkness; finally, I told her that, since my present and future belonged to her, my past should also, and I would relate it all to her.

This I did in many letters, writing every day and mingling the impressions of the present with the story of the past.

Once every week I despatched the manuscript to Nuremberg after having, through friends of mine in Munich, assured myself that three brothers named Yves, manufacturers, really lived there; I thus felt sure that my letters would, in time, reach Violet.

Usually I wrote late at night, and with ineffable desire and impetuousness opened my heart to her, relating ancient faults and miseries which previously I had scarcely dared to name to myself.

One after another burdensome dwellers arose and departed from my conscience; some that had slept in the depths forgotten, awoke all at once, touched by the new fire burning in my soul, and rising, prepared to combat me—a pang of pain, a feeling of strife, a glow of

conquest—it was written, it was away from me for ever, what peace and consolation !

I told also any trifling good that it seemed to me I had occasionally done, with the joy of a child, who, after having confessed some grave fault, hastens to add, smiling and palpitating with hope, any praiseworthy deed it has also done.

Sometimes the letter finished, a thrill of bliss went through me, and I felt like a sick person who knows he is rapidly recovering ; then my eyes would grow dim, and with clasped hands I would whisper to the stars : " Oh, that she might also be cured and believe with me ! "

My outer life was told in a few words, but my inner one was a fortuitous drama which occupied numerous letters.

Signorina Yves did not answer, nor did I ever ask her to do so ; my idea was simply to prepare for the future moment when, though I did not yet know when or where, I would stand face to face with Violet and make the supreme effort, asking her to be mine.

When I had related all my life up to our meeting, the letters became a still greater joy to me ; for whereas it was impossible that she could have seen any reflection of herself in the dark waters of my past, where the two dreams alone shed a little brightness, her image now lived within me, thought in my

thoughts and loved in my heart, each day with greater intensity, so that I myself was amazed and feared sometimes to love an ideal conception apart from the real Violet; then to reassure myself I was obliged to recall her dear form and imagine the bliss of possessing it, a thought which caused vision and respiration almost to fail me.

Henceforward in my life-narrative it was nearly the same as if I spoke of Violet herself.

In the middle of the autumn it occurred to me to compose a romance. I no longer thought of the idyll, partly because the "Signora" had suggested it and partly because my head was full of motives, comic as well as pathetic, for which verse would have been an impediment.

I at once spoke to Violet of this in my letters, telling the first confused ideas as they came, and then all the vicissitudes through which they passed, and describing for her the real persons from whom I wished to form my characters; planning one day one method of intertwining and unravelling the threads of action, and the next day some other.

I wrote all to her, although I knew that the future effect of the book would thus be marred, in order that she should know all, all, that was in my soul; my vacillations, the aridity of my imagination and the part played by chance

in my artistic discoveries ; for though I wished her love for me to be absolute, the thought of winning unmerited admiration from her was hateful to me.

After a month's incessant but capricious labour, I had only the first three or four chapters clearly in mind and had not yet conceived a complete plot which satisfied me. Realising, therefore, that if I persisted in trying to plan the entire romance beforehand I would end by giving way to despair, I, without further reflection, began to write, confident that, when once the story was well started, it would develop more naturally of itself; every week I copied out my work and sent it to Violet.

When, however, I had finished the fourth chapter, an attack of dark despondency overcame me ; I began to doubt whether I would know how to continue ; the doubt grew terror, and at last even the chapters already finished seemed to me absurd, cold and valueless.

I fancied that I was losing both talent and judgment and could no longer write, persuading myself that it was because my work was so unworthy that Violet had abstained from sending me even a line.

I wrote telling her how I suffered ; then fell into a state of utter hopelessness, and for two weeks ceased all correspondence.

On the 12th of December I received an

envelope from Naples in Signorina Yves' handwriting, containing a palm leaf and a white violet—nothing more.

I was so overcome with joy that I had scarcely the force to kiss the letter and odorous flower:—

“ My soul intoxicate with flame and light,
Spreads pinions wide and storm-tossed wends its flight.”

It was thus again with me; all had returned in a flash, faith in myself and power.

What I had written appeared to me again full of life and beauty; and when I thought of the further development of the plot, though I did not yet see it in its entirety, continual inspiratory flashes showed me innumerable scenes and threads of intrigue. I immediately resumed work and I know that I never had such a rich vein.

I shall not speak of the acknowledgment which I wrote Violet; I think my very handwriting must have revealed the frenzy of my rapture!

Towards the middle of December I returned to the city. What a winter it was and with what impetuosity I studied.

It was not indeed the first time that horror at the large, shameful gaps in my knowledge—certainly unsuspected by the world—had spurred me on to study.

In a few months I devoured Ranke's

"History of the Papacy," all Alfieri, all Mickiewicz, innumerable volumes of popular Italian poetry, the greater portion of Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister," of Herbert Spencer's "Principles of Sociology," and the Comedies of Plautus, at the same time imposing on myself daily one of Dante's cantos, a hundred lines from Virgil and fifty from the *Odysssey*.

I worked indefatigably, finding my only relaxation in the letters to Violet, the romance and Homer; for, although I knew little Greek, Homer soothed and refreshed me like a bath in a pure and limpid fountain.

I went also into society, and appeared occasionally at the theatre. You will remember that I never missed your "Wednesdays."

For the sake of appearances I sometimes visited the "Signora," who had, I think, a pious hatred of me in the obscure depths of her heart. I felt her silent hostility as well as that of all her intimate friends, and divined that she spoke against me and my books, but this did not disturb me, for I always disdained—and now more than ever!—to concern myself about such things.

Perhaps these people were right, but, if Violet loved me and sent me a palm leaf, what did I care for their opinion?

If ever I thought of them and their accusations, it was with a sort of gratitude, for it is salutary for all men—and especially for us

poets, vainglorious species!—to know that all the outspoken human praise, which so inebriates us, is interwoven with falsehood; for usually, extolling a writer to his face, one lies, either altogether, or in part.

Am I myself indeed blameless? *Omnis homo mendax*, I believe, and when I have proof of this in the severe censures which those who commend me when I am present pass on me in my absence, I am pleased to be able to ratify the truth. I oblige my pride to weigh the arguments of my detractors, accepting what is just and rejecting the rest, and then I feel the ground more secure under my feet, my intelligence more at liberty and my heart fortified.

People found me changed; my rupture with the “Signora” was commented on, and it was thought that I must have another “liaison”; suppositions were hazarded and then found to be false; some ladies coquettled a little with me, but soon desisted, finding me glacial.

My brother and sister-in-law were not less surprised than others at the alteration in my habits and disposition, and even in my very appearance; at first they interrogated me a little, but seeing that this did not please me, and that I only replied by generalities, they said no more. I think, however, that my sister-in-law—I pardon it to her!—examined the writing on the letters that came for me in

order to see whether any unknown hand wrote often to me.

At the beginning of April I heard from my friends in Munich that Signor Yves was expected back in Nuremberg towards the middle of May, whereon I decided that the time for seeing Violet again had come.

In writing my weekly letter to her I paused a moment to consider whether I would keep my intention secret in order to succeed more easily in my purpose and to avoid a prohibition by surprising her; then, reflecting that this would not be loyal, I wrote that I was leaving. I did not, however, start immediately, waiting eight days for a letter; none came, and on the 15th of April I was in Naples, where it needed, in truth, a faith as strong as mine to begin such a search without any help in the world.

After a week of fruitless effort, of alternate hope and anguish, I found a clue, unexpectedly, at the Museo Nazionale, where, seeing some ladies intent on copying the pictures, it occurred to me to ask whether Violet had also requested such a permission.

I thus learned that a Signorina Yves had indeed frequented the museum from December to March, but one of the custodians, who remembered her, assured me she had not been there for over a month.

It then struck me that she had probably

gone to her relatives in Rome, and I left immediately for that city.

I shall always remember how my heart leaped at the Albano Station, catching sight of a lady, tall and fair, who walked like Violet.

She turned, and I saw it was not my beloved, though, curiously enough, she resembled her in face also.

Afterwards she got into my coupé, and, finding a sort of reflection of Violet in her, I suppose I regarded her strangely, for she coloured, and began to talk hastily to her companions ; she was German, and her voice sounded melodious as she observed that she thought the Lago di Nimi "Märchenhaft."

I wonder, *gentile straniera*, if you guessed the cause of my so contemplating you ? You responded sometimes to my gaze by a limpid, wondering look, absolutely free from coquetry.

When not regarding my lovely vis-à-vis, I contemplated with an oppressed heart the solemn desert and spectral ruins of the "Campagna," haunted against my will by the thought of the possibility of Violet's death, and seeing before me a vision of a long life, desolate and chill.

In Rome I went first to the English cemetery, thinking that Violet would surely visit Shelley's tomb before returning to Germany. I was, however, unable to extract anything from the caretaker, and could only describe

her and beg him to observe all visitors closely on the chance that she might yet come there.

This faint hope was all I had in Rome, not knowing the name of Violet's relations there.

I went, therefore, every day out to Porta San Paolo, always receiving the same discouraging answer.

I frequented the Pincio, the English church, all the places where there was the slightest possibility of my meeting her, leading a torturing existence of continuous exasperation with myself because I could not be everywhere at the same time, in dread lest I should lose my happiness through a minute of delay or anticipation.

After the perpetual rushing I was wearied to death when evening came, yet my inexorable heart gave me no rest, crying ever, On, on!

Meanwhile the end of April had come, and I began to think that Signorina Yves might already have left Italy, so, unable longer to endure the febrile fatigue, I resolved to cease my vain research and leave for Nuremberg.

During this time I had written two letters to Violet.

In the first, from Naples, I had implored her, if near me, to reveal herself, and later, writing from Rome, I had even indicated Shelley's monument as a meeting-place, naming

a date which well allowed time for a letter to go to Nuremberg and return.

When the day came I stood four hours in the "Campo Santo" listening to the death-like silence, watching the wind agitate the Banksea roses on the ruined tower behind Shelley's tomb, reading and re-reading the inscription :—

" Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange."

I felt as if the mysterious lines engraved upon the stone alluded to my love, and that it would only bloom, with an unknown strange splendour, in the promised land which no mortal eye yet has seen.

And this distant and uncertain hope not sufficing me, in fancy I embraced with desperate passion my love, my living bride, all palpitating with the love that dies, and straining her to my breast, defended her against the unknown, begging of God, in pity, to grant me at least one day, even one hour.

She did not come, so I left by the night train for Northern Italy, and a few days later, on the 7th of May, was travelling towards the Brenner Pass.

CHAPTER XI

AN indescribable feeling of anguish and uncertainty possessed me, which was heightened by the rapid, unwavering motion of the train, as with agitation I reflected that perhaps Violet had not returned, and that I might only be flying from her.

Vainly I questioned the wooded hills, flowery slopes, and sonorous Eisack, asking whether they had seen my love.

It was the first time that I crossed the Brenner Pass, and the egress from my country was made still more solemn by this as well as by the different aspect of everything, and the consciousness that, beyond these enormous mountains, close at hand, lay the mystery of a great land, unknown, save through the clouds which had brought me phantasms, and the winds on which sounds of melancholy poetry and strange music had been borne to me.

The lonely Brenner-See, sparkling like a profound human eye, appeared to me as "Märchenhaft," as the Lago di Nemi to the German maiden; and shortly afterwards, at Innsbruck station, walking up and down

the platform in a gale of wind, amid the rushing to and fro of a people strange to me, I thought really to dream and to have crossed the threshold of a fantastic world.

During the journey I felt in that peculiar state of mind that the nearer I came to my distant goal, Nuremberg, the more I wished to defer the moment of arriving there, and to postpone the day when, meeting Violet, I would learn my fate.

On the morning after my arrival in Munich I strolled early through the green solitudes of the "Englischer Garten," where all was placid sunshine and hazy depths, the shades of which were alive with the flutterings of wings and joyous trills.

As I paused beside the dark, motionless lake, contemplating the peace of nature which is so restful after a long journey, the feeling experienced at Innsbruck, amid the uproar caused by the wind, the noise of the train, and the shouting of the people, returned still stronger.

This time the dream was sweet and troubled, "so süß, so trüb."

I felt I was in the country where Signorina Yves had lived, where the very air seemed to exhale her thoughts, and the opaque waters, and clouds of mist veiling all distant objects, surrounded me with the mystery that envelops dreams.

CHAPTER XII

I LEFT for Nuremberg in the afternoon, and it was not far from sunset when the train, leaving the bland, verdant valley of the Altmühl, turned directly north between two interminable horizons.

Absorbed in the one unique idea, and agitated every instant by the fumes of an inflamed imagination, I was scarcely conscious of the country—so different from Italy—which passed, continuously changing, before my eyes; nevertheless the varying scenes mixed themselves with my thoughts, and to some extent coloured them. While regarding, in the splendour of the sinking sun, the flow of the peaceful Altmühl, so azure amid the yellow pastures, I was reposed, and thoughts of a serene future came to me; when I no longer saw the river my heart began to throb violently again.

I knew that Nuremberg could not now be far distant, but, leaning out to see where the train was carrying me, I could see nothing but mist on the horizon; the air turned cold, and the last rays of the sun lit up a solemn land-

scape of tall pines and vast red plains of sand.

I became conscious that I was in the north, and it seemed to me that this sky, this land, was the true home of a soul like Violet's; I felt that here I would find her still more grave and sad, still more immersed in her heart's deep fires. But, would I find her? that was my torturing thought.

Towards eight o'clock the remains of mediaeval bulwarks appeared in view, and Nuremberg, the mysterious, was before me.

Through the dark entrance of the Frauenthör I passed into a stone-paved way, between antiquated gabled houses, while in the distance gigantic towers arose in the blended lights of twilight and the moon.

At the hotel I made enquiries about the Yves family, but neither the waiters nor the proprietor knew anything; the latter questioned two gentlemen who were taking supper, but could only learn that there was a foundry Yves in the Burgschmiedstrasse.

I cannot tell what an impression it made on me to hear the name *Yves* spoken so unconcernedly in that hotel room!

“The very music of the name has gone
Into my being,”

and when a voice speaks it my ear is sensitive to the slightest discord between it and the

eternal music sounding within me, and the greater this is, the more I suffer.

After deciding that next morning I would go to the Burgschmiedstrasse, I meanwhile went out that same evening, finding an acute pleasure in wandering at random, in the darkness, through this city I had for so long dreamed of, in imagining that in this or that house the Yves might live, in wondering what Violet would feel if she knew that I were passing under her windows.

This was a world still more fantastic than the valley of the Inn and the Englischer Garten!

Passing under the shadow of the dark Lorenzkirche, behind whose enormous towers the moon was rising, I mounted and descended through abruptly winding streets, now in total darkness, now dazzled by the brightness shed by electric lamps, hung on high.

Around these spots of silvery light the old houses loomed mysteriously out of the surrounding darkness, their large, quaint gables, covered with carving, fixed on straight or awry, according to individual taste.

I remember an open place by the river, with five or six streets going off in different directions, where I paused long under a lamp in the centre, observing the silent forms that came and went in the piercing white light, with the idea that, where so many ways joined, there was more chance of meeting Violet ; time

went, however, and the passers - by became fewer and fewer, so that I finally lost hope, and, with lingering steps, departed.

I ascended the Konigsstrasse, which at this end is dark and narrow, in the direction of the Lorenzkirche, near which I lodged, and whose towers served me as a point of orientation in that unfamiliar world.

An open landau, without lamps, which was preceding me at walking pace, stopped nearly opposite the Café Sonne ; a gentleman of small stature got out, and, leaning his elbows on the carriage door, began to speak in a shrill, vivacious voice.

A moment later I heard a laugh, and another voice, which petrified me, replied : "Sie Böser!"

It was Violet !

With throbbing heart I stopped a few paces from them ; the man turned his head towards me, and I then went to the other side of the carriage, pretending to observe the roof and pinnacles of the "Nassauer Haus," which shot up in the moonlight.

The conversation continued ; Violet spoke in an affectionate tone, the stranger gaily, in a voice which did not sound youthful ; they were discussing whether or not they would meet next day.

"Very well," said Signorina Yves finally, "till the day after to-morrow then?"

"The day after to-morrow," he repeated, "at half-past six A.M. at the station."

They saluted; he entered the Café Sonne and Violet bent forward to speak to the coachman; I then repeated rather loudly the two first lines of the poem so dear to her:—

"Had I thy love, my choice should be
No cross nor stone."

She turned with a start; I was already by the carriage door, and took both her hands in mine; for some moments neither she nor I could utter a word.

It was dark, but we were so close together that I could see that her eyes burned with the same intense, unsuspected passion, as in that happy moment when, after reading for the first time my verses on Love and Death, she had regarded me in silence.

She then threw a glance at the driver and withdrew her hands hastily.

"You?" she murmured in Italian. "What has brought you here?"

"How can you ask me?" I replied. "I come from Naples."

"From Naples!" she exclaimed in German, "Do you make a stay here?" Then added in the previous tone, in Italian, "Oh! why have you come? My God, you ought not to have come!"

She was silent an instant; then, as, in a de-

licious whispering tone, she uttered my name, a thrill went through her, a quickly repressed yearning of all her person towards me.

"‘Addio’!" she then said, "I must not remain longer and cannot see you again, suspicion has already been aroused by your letters."

"You cannot see me again?" I asked in a voice that must have sounded very desolate, for she answered, "My God! you must know that it is not my wish to pain you; I ought not perhaps to do this, but, tell me, where are you staying?"

"At the ‘ZUM ROTHEN HAHN’ Hotel, near here."

"To-morrow you will get a letter from me. ‘Addio,’ again, God guard you! thanks for all and believe that I am not ungrateful, ‘Addio’!" She then added in German: "In case I should not see you again, I wish you an agreeable journey! Take my greetings to Naples and the rock." While saying this she had removed one of her gloves and now extended her hand to me; I pressed it in both of mine and kissed it murmuring, "Tell me where you live, I shall not come, but tell me!"

"Leave me, I beg of you!" she replied, terror and despair in her voice as though she were at the same time combating herself and me. "I shall write to you. ‘Addio.’"

"At least," I entreated, "tell me whether the man who spoke with you is——"

"No, no!" she said with a smile, and only then did I see the tears in her eyes.

A suspicion struck me that perhaps she was already married and I asked her.

"Not yet," she replied, "but that makes no difference, the marriage will take place."

"You love me," I answered, "and I shall not yield, as you know well."

These were our last words; Violet withdrew her hand and called out something to the coachman, the equipage started, turned in the adjoining square and came towards me again at a trot; then all passed away like a vision down the shadowy descent of the Königs-gasse.

I went back to the hotel and shut myself up in my room to palpitate voluptuously in the intense sweetness of the moment just over.

It was to me dazzlingly clear that this encounter, this last supreme favour, came from the same source as the two prophetic dreams.

I had found Signorina Yves, I knew that she loved me and was yet free; it was essential now not to lose a single moment. Next morning I would receive her letter, but would it tell me anything about the certainly imminent marriage or the reasons which forced her into it? Perhaps. But meanwhile, I must inquire on my own account; I at once

looked out for the Burgschmiedstrasse on the map of Nuremberg, for, even if the Yves did not live at the foundry, I could find out their address there. Then, remembering that Violet and her companion had appointed to meet at the station at half-past six in the morning, I looked out in the time-table and found that between six and seven a train left for Munich.

Before going to bed I opened the window and regarded the forest of pointed roofs and the towers of the Lorenzkirche, over which the moon had now risen, bathing in silvery light the elevated gothic traceries.

I contemplated long the city where Signorina Yves' life had been passed and in some part of which she was now thinking of me, and experienced the mental exaltation felt by a traveller who, on arriving in a land of antique fame, and seeing everything around him unusual and sublime, discovers, with emotion, that there is a mysterious affinity between this unknown country and his own sentiments, and that this part of the earth is, in some strange way, his also.

CHAPTER XIII

It was raining, next morning, when I left the hotel at half-past five ; at the end of the street the circular tower of the Frauenthaler was veiled in fog.

I walked towards the spot where I had met Violet ; not a being was to be seen, the Café Sonne was still closed, and the only sound was the quiet voice of the neighbouring bronze fountain.

To reach the Burgschmiedstrasse I was obliged to traverse the deserted city, grey with mist and so fantastic in its venerable antiquity.

Below massive bridges I saw a meagre river bordered by antique, sombre dwellings, crowned with turrets and pinnacles, which lost themselves in the clouds. Around me, still intact, stood exquisite monuments of a dead genius—saints, monks and warriors of those olden days were petrified on the eaves of the buildings, over the doors, on the parapets of the passages, and on the wooden balconies projecting from the façades.

I felt as though the human race had passed away and the sun's light long been quenched,

as though these streets were an apparition from the past and I myself a shadow.

A little way beyond the Thiergärtnerthor I found the Yves' foundry ; one of the workmen told me that the family lived in Theresienstrasse, and gave me the number. I asked whether his chief were likely to come later on to the foundry.

"Which one ?" he asked ; "there are three brothers."

I then spoke of the Signor Yves who had been in Italy, and learned that he and the Signorina had returned three weeks before, that he was not in good health and did not often visit the foundry, but that next day he would come for certain ; I expressed surprise at this, saying that I thought he was going to Munich in the morning. The man replied that this was impossible. Before leaving, I ventured to ask whether the employés were not preparing a present for the Signorina on her marriage ; he had heard nothing about it.

"You know, at all events," I added, "when the wedding takes place ?"

"No," he answered, with indifference ; "it is no concern of mine."

"I then made my way to the Theresienstrasse, passing by the shady alleys of the Burg, where perhaps Violet was in the habit of walking, and soon found, close by a fountain, the house I sought, a tasteful building in

the Teutonic Renaissance style, adorned with projecting balconies and the "masskrüge" cupolas typical of Bavaria; two windows together on the first floor had flowers, were they Violet's? Perhaps she was there now writing to me!

I questioned an old woman, who was drawing water into a metal vessel at the fountain, as to whether it was the Yves' house, but she did not know.

It was now raining heavily; all the windows continued closed, yet, unable to tear myself from the spot, I kept passing and repassing the house, although uncertain whether it were well to let Violet see me.

At last a hairdressing saloon was opened, and I entered, hoping to extract some information from the "Friseur"; a youth in black clothes and spectacles, who appeared to be a student of metaphysics, saluted me on my entrance with an air of descending with difficulty and amazement from contemplation of the origin of thought to the base world around him, ill-illuminated by the foggy morning light and a faint gas flame.

With some difficulty I drew from him that the neighbouring house did belong to the Signori Yves, that they were bachelors, that their niece was soon to be married to Professor Topler, who had lived many years in Nuremberg and now lectured in the Gym-

nasium at Eichstätt; further, that he was about forty, was small and stout, and wore whiskers.

The very spectacles of the phlegmatic barber appeared stupefied; assuredly such an inquisitive customer had never before obliged him to quit his metaphysics!

Eichstätt? The name was not new to me; it seemed to me that I had read it the previous day over a solitary station in the midst of wooded hills, and also to have heard my friends in Munich speak of it.

Well satisfied with this first ray of light, I returned to the street; it was still raining, and not one of the windows of the Yves' house had yet been opened.

I decided to return to my hotel and look up Eichstätt in my Baedeker, where I found that it was a small, very ancient town, five *kilometri* from its station, on the line between Nuremberg and Munich.

It was clear that it was to Eichstätt that Signorina Yves was going next day, equally clear that I also must go there.

While I stood wondering what pretext I could give for going there, there was a knock at the door and a waiter came to tell me that if I descended I could now obtain the information I had vainly asked for the night before.

I went down, and a gentleman who sat breakfasting, and chatting in a friendly manner

with the host, immediately addressed me saying that he was well acquainted with the Yves, people of the strictest probity and of very solid reputation, although their business was not so good as formerly, because the construction of machines, *der Maschinenbau*, was now in decadence in Nuremberg.

He had, I saw, taken me for a commercial traveller, but, soon perceiving that I was not satisfied, he anticipated my question by asking whether I desired more personal information.

I replied with assumed carelessness that I had only enquired because I had known one of the brothers in Italy, and passing through Nuremberg had been curious to hear something about him ; whereupon he eulogised him in general terms, adding that the time in Italy had not improved his health. When, however, he heard that I was only making a short stay in the town, and did not propose visiting the Yves, he spoke about them more freely.

The conversation soon turned on Violet, about whom my new acquaintance was most enthusiastic although he had only spoken two or three times with her ; I saw that he considered her far superior to her uncles in intelligence, culture, and sentiment, and that he thought the moral atmosphere of the Yves' house could not be congenial to her.

The Yves were worthy men but too absorbed in the *Maschinenbau*, and besides

of rather narrow ideas ; Violet's father, who was an artist, had married an Italian and had died in England shortly after his young Roman wife, leaving his only child badly off, when the uncles had adopted her.

Signorina Yves was now about twenty-five ; it was thought that she had renounced all idea of matrimony, partly because of her infirmity and partly because of a certain unfortunate experience she had had many years before, when suddenly it had been announced that she was affianced to Herr Topler, who, though a very estimable and respected professor, did not appear well adapted to a lady of exquisite tastes like Signorina Violet ; the marriage, which had been repeatedly postponed, was now to take place at the end of July immediately after the closure of the classes.

All this I learned by degrees from my companion, with whom I had finished by breakfasting, in order to render the conversation easier.

When he had alluded to "a certain unfortunate experience," my heart had contracted ; for, though I had from the first divined that Violet's sadness was the after effect of a great tempest of passion, and she herself in speaking and writing to me had alluded to a similar past, I suffered as though, till then, I had had an unreasonable hope that she had not told the truth.

At the moment I did not dare ask an explanation and the talk turned on other subjects. We spoke of the Nuremberg arts, of Veit Stoss, of Krafft, and of the Germanisches Museum, when my companion said that if I wished to form an idea of what Professor Topler was like I should go to the museum and look at the antique stone friar placed on the side of the Karthausergasse.

I then risked, in an indifferent tone, a question about Signorina Yves' past.

"Sad affair," he replied ; "the old story ! too much faith in men !"

He had finished his breakfast, and with these words rose and left me, with my heart full of bitterness and my brain harassed by disquieting suspicions and anguish ; my imagination gave me no peace, showing me continually images which I could neither banish nor endure.

I suffered much, and my heart was weary before I was able to find again invigorating sweetness and consolation in the thought that now Violet loved me.

CHAPTER XIV

THE first post brought me no letter and I resolved to spend the three hours until the second distribution in visiting the Germanisches Museum.

I wandered for an hour through a labyrinth of lofty halls, marble staircases and gothic cloisters, where jets of water murmured in the shadows, and through the stained glass windows a faint light fell, colouring sepulchral sculptures, pausing now and again to observe through an open doorway the vivid green of the grass and inhale the clear pure air; and I was in the act of regarding the colossal "Bremer Roland" which stands in one of these courts, when I heard behind me a voice I seemed to recognise.

I turned and saw an old gentleman, of clerical aspect, speaking irritably to one of the custodians, who listened smilingly; he was inveighing against the stupidity of the person who had taken a statue of Saint George off some house in Nuremberg to place it in the Museum.

The face and figure were strange to me, though I had certainly heard a similar voice before.

He was still fuming when he left the custodian and, as he passed by me, in order to examine the "Roland" closer, he fixed his angry eyes on mine as though asking, "Am I not right?"

His small stooping figure was clothed entirely in black, and his fiery eyes were in startling contradiction to his decrepit appearance.

He rapidly made the tour of the "Roland," and as he repassed me muttering contemptuously—"Cement!"—I asked myself again where on earth I had heard that voice before.

I encountered him again in one of the chapels where the collection of ecclesiastical art is, seated before a picture by Kaulbach representing the young Emperor Otto III. breaking, in a drunken whim, with his fellow revellers, into the tomb of Karl der Grosse, and discovering there, by the light of the torches, the corpse enthroned, majestic and terrible.

He was giving vent to his admiration aloud, repeating: "Beautiful! most beautiful!"—rushing from his stool to examine the figures so close that his long pointed nose almost touched them, and then hurrying back to his seat.

When he saw me he exclaimed, his eyes flashing, this time with pleasure: "This is

a consolation!" — and I got an inspiration, it was the voice I had heard speaking to Violet in front of the Café Sonne!

I hastened to enter into conversation with him, admiring the composition of the picture but making some reflections on the colour, which appeared to me dull and spiritless, in order to rouse and thus detain him, explaining myself with difficulty, as my German is laboured and incorrect.

I thought he would devour me!

"*Wie, wie, wie!*" he exclaimed. "*Es ist ja eine Gruft! Es ist ja eine Leiche!*"¹

I maintained my opinion, that the shadows of the picture though dark, have no depth, that the glow cast by the torches on the corpse is yellow but without light, that the figures are wanting in relief.

As we discussed my companion became milder and finally said: "The fact is I do not pay much attention to colour, for me the conception is everything and I go straight to the thought in the picture; thought is something which does not exist in nature, it is peculiar to the human mind and unites all ages.

Here my mind reads in that of the great poet who has painted this sublime idea, this grand vision of the past! What do I care whether the colouring is dull and spiritless

¹ "What, what, what!" he exclaimed. "But it is a vault! That is a corpse!"

when it makes more impression on me thus?
“Are you French, Monsieur?”

When he heard that I was Italian he displayed a keen and joyous surprise and seized my arm. “*Aus Rom? mein Herr? aus Rom?*” he exclaimed, and I felt that my reply was a disappointment to him; he had hoped that I was from Rome or at least Venice or Florence, but soon resigned himself to my modest Lombardian country.

“Oh Italy, Italy,” he cried; “‘*Ille terrarum mihi proeter omnes angulus ridet!*’ You understand?” “‘*Ubi non Hymetto?*’” I replied, “‘*mella decadunt.*’” He almost embraced me; we were henceforth friends! We visited the ecclesiastical collection together, my companion discoursing freely and agreeably; he had often been to the museum before, but never visited more than two or three halls at a time; indeed the custodians appeared to know him well; I heard one pointing him out laughingly to a colleague as *der Schwabe!*

Meanwhile the hour of the second post delivery had arrived, so I took leave of my companion, at whose desire we exchanged visiting cards; with a start I read on his—“Dr Stephan Topler!”

I was not sure whether he were a priest or not, but it was impossible that he could be Signorina Yves’ fiancé!

CHAPTER XV

VIOLET'S letter awaited me at the hotel ; it is the only one which I have not kept, for having read and re-read it many times, I burnt it in an impulse of pride and jealousy, unable to endure near me certain words, which were intended to cure me by fire and sword, but only filled me with a cruel fever that I knew, for I had had it before, and which irritated me all the more because I felt sure of overcoming it.

I do not well remember the preamble ; she began, I think, by attributing chiefly to surprise her agitation on the previous evening, and then spoke with gratitude of the letters in which I had opened my heart to her, assuring me that she would always keep them in affectionate recollection ; the words that then followed I remember perfectly :—

“ Invincible reasons forbid my allowing my sentiment for you to exceed this. If I did I should be thrust back again by the reproaches of the past, the command of the present, and the menace of the future.

“ A night of painful reflection has convinced me that I must be yet harder than this.

“ At the present moment I view my position

in the same way as before we met for the first time with sympathy ; I was weak when I sent you that flower from Naples, weaker still last evening. I must guard against such lapses in the future, and therefore beg you to consider all intercourse at an end between us save in remembrance.

"Should you not agree to this and seek to see me again, I shall be forced to appear to have lost even all memory of you—you would not inflict such suffering on me, would you ?

"What I have written is my inflexible decision. If this can moderate your passion, know that I can never love again as I loved years ago, and I would be ashamed if I could. It is not in your power to render me as happy or as unhappy as another did."

My hand trembled with agitation, holding this letter to the flames ; the false words became ashes, the affected coldness blazed away, and all the unavailing falsehood disappeared from between us.

"What if you have loved ?" I cried out, in fancy pressing her in my arms with passion and anger. "What does it matter if you have loved others before me ? Can you know, you who love me, how happy I shall make you ? and what, in God's name, is the past, present, or future, that could take you from me ?"

I replied immediately thus :—

"I have burned your letter ; some day in

the future when God has united us, it might grieve you that I had preserved it."

When I had with my own hands posted this I felt more tranquil, and went to see the city ; but, in truth, I thought more of the moment when Signorina Yves would see me at the station, and of that when I would hear "Eichstätt" called, than of admiring the old "Streusandbüchse des deutschen Reiches," as the Germans name Nuremberg. I was decided on making known to Violet as soon as possible that I was going to Eichstätt, and that I knew the object of her journey. I did not, however, endeavour to see her, and in mounting from Sankt Sebaldus to the Burg, barely glanced through the opening of the Theresienstrasse at the flowered balconies of the Yves' house ; later on, going to the "St Johannis Kirchhof," where Albrecht Dürer sleeps, I passed by the door of the foundry without even casting a look within.

My thoughts were more occupied with love than art ; yet, I confess, that sometimes the energy and grace of an old master filled me with enthusiasm, and exalted me, not above love, but above the cares and uncertainties of the present.

Before the "Schöner Brunnen," Adam Krafft's Tabernacle in the Lorenzkirche, and the celebrated doors of the Sebalduskirche, the rapture of beauty overcame me ; I rejoiced that

I, too, was an artist, and thought with happiness that Violet's love would inspire me also with a fire of ideas and work.

The "Signora" had declared herself jealous of my Muse, not knowing what real love is. But Violet! in my creations and in my soul she would see herself, always herself, everywhere herself, as the sun sees itself reflected in every living thing.

I remember that it was raining when I mounted the Vestner Thurm, and cold gusts of wind and rain entered through the paneless windows of the roofed platform, where the caretaker of the tower indicated placidly, with his pipe, the other towers, churches, and monuments of the city, and then with perfect composure named invisible towns in the distant mists.

I asked him in what direction Eichstätt lay.

"Eichstätt? you say Eichstätt?" he repeated in surprise, and then stretching his arm out of one of the windows, he waved his hand vaguely towards the south, as if to express a long, long way off.

Dreamingly I stood there, regarding, but seeing nothing, unconscious of the wind and rain which beat in my face.

CHAPTER XVI

NEXT morning the sun shone; I was at the station an hour too soon, and then only, as I strolled up and down the deserted "Platz" between the station and the post-office, did it occur to me that Violet might have changed her plans, or that some impediment might have arisen.

Tortured by my imagination I reproached myself for not having first gone to the Theresienstrasse to see whether the windows showed any signs of the inmates being already up; I wished still to go there, but feared I had not time, and finally hesitated so long that the thing became impossible.

Carriages began to arrive, and by good fortune my anxiety did not last long, for at half-past six the Yves' landau came through the Frauenthor.

Violet, who was accompanied by three ladies and a gentleman, looked very white but was smiling; she descended, I saw, with difficulty from the carriage and immediately looked around as though in search of someone; I stood some distance off, and, being near-sighted, she did not notice me.

Then, with the others, she entered the waiting-room, where a few moments later I followed them.

Her companions were laughing with their cavalier, a middle-aged man, about someone who kept them waiting, and suddenly all, except Violet, hurried to the entrance; I, who had been walking up and down the room, then passed nearer and was seen by her.

I made no effort to address her, but looked at her with the desire that my regard might speak for me; she trembled all over, and it seemed to me that her eyes closed; then she turned her head quickly away.

At this moment my friend of the "Germanisches Museum," for whom they had evidently been waiting, entered somewhat noisily, an umbrella in one hand, a thick stick in the other; he paid no attention to the other ladies who were fluttering round him, and went straight to shake hands with Signorina Yves.

Violet's face was flushed and, though her eyes could not be said ever to sparkle, an unusual light shone in them; as Dr Topler sat down beside her, one of the party, a blonde maiden, exclaimed, clapping her hands, in a little voice rippling with laughter: "Oh! please, please—look at Violet!"

I saw Signorina Yves flush yet more and make a gesture of impatience and reproach; I heard Topler, in jest, appropriate blissfully

to himself all the compliment of her blushes ; then Violet doubtless said something sharp, which I did not hear, to her young friend, because the latter assumed a mortified expression and all became silent ; I continued walking about, inwardly in a tumult of agitation.

Presently Dr Topler raised his eyes, recognised me, and, greeting me in Latin, came towards me with extended arms, as though I were some old friend.

I glanced at Violet ; she was gazing at us, pale with surprise ; the others also were regarding us curiously.

Topler asked whether I were going to Munich ; I replied "No," that I was going to Eichstätt, speaking in a loud, distinct tone ; he broke out into expressions of great surprise.

"Then we travel together," he said. "*Misere cupis abire!* we must travel together," and related that he also was going to Eichstätt with his friends.

He then turned his back on me and rushed away, agitating his stick and umbrella, to inform the others about me. I had not failed the previous day to make a display of any Latin and all the German literature that I had in my head in order to win his sympathy, and I now saw by his gestures that he was relating great things about me to Signorina Yves, who wore a cold expression and scarcely appeared to listen.

When the moment of departure came, the other gentleman gave Violet his arm, the three ladies went together, and Topler accompanied me, saying that I must absolutely stay with them as he had many things to ask me about Italy, where he intended soon going for the third time; thus, without the slightest indiscretion on my part, I found myself in the same carriage with Signorina Yves, who was as agitated as I was, and never turned her head in my direction; we sat as far as possible from one another.

The ladies looked at each other smilingly and then at me, as if to excuse the eccentric manners of their *Schwabe*, their eyes saying clearly: "What must you think of us?"

Topler apparently noticed nothing, for he began at once to attack me with questions about the new edifices in Rome and Florence, the restorations in Venice and the modern Italian music.

I replied to the best of my power, and then he would pour forth a swift fire of vivacious comments, his eyes, his whole face and even his hair seeming to sparkle, now with joy, now ablaze with anger; I noticed, however, that if, in speaking of Rome, I touched on the Pope or the new régime, he became silent and immediately changed the conversation.

In music he was a furious anti-Wagnerian and a fiery admirer of the old Italian masters especially of Clementi.

At first we two spoke alone, but after a time he began to fling words right and left, like grappling hooks, wrenching off here a smile, there a word, and thus, by degrees, succeeded in working up a general conversation. Violet's silence alone he was unable to overcome.

We finished by discussing everything a little : art, nature, Italy and Germany.

I spoke only for Violet ; for her I depicted Venice to the youthful "Blondine," who was curious about the sea, the gondola and the doves ; she did not appear to know what love was, or even to ever cast a thought on it ; when I said to her that the soft silence, the strange aspect and oblivious air of Venice were for wounded souls in need of forgetting love, she replied : "Then Venice is not for me !" her face sparkling with laughter and turned towards Violet, over whose cheeks a flush passed.

"Silence and oblivion can be found also in Eichstätt," observed Dr Topler, "and now there is also a horrible iron bridge there, perhaps like those you have seen in Venice ; for modern civilisation no Alps exist ; we are barbarians, you are barbarians, all are barbarians ! This Signore," he continued, addressing the others, "is a much more enterprising Italian than Christopher Columbus ; he is coming to discover Eichstätt !"

All expressed surprise that a stranger should

wish to see Eichstätt, a place, according to Topler, so melancholy and deserted that even the Altmühl, the river, came there unwillingly and as slowly as possible ; perhaps he only spoke thus in order to tease the others ; all, in fact, protested warmly.

It occurred to me to name my friends in Munich, from whom I had heard of Eichstätt, whereupon the "Blondine" clapped her hands and the ladies exclaimed that they were also intimate, dear friends of theirs, and Topler ejaculated, "Ah, ah, ah!" highly pleased.

The "Blondine" could not understand why Violet did not find the incident strange ; and while the others were asking me about a member of the family then in Italy, she interrogated her in a low tone and then caressed her, whispering something, probably affectionate words, in her ear ; Violet shook her head, half smiling and half annoyed by her, but did not speak.

Dr Topler had from time to time cast uneasy glances in their direction, and now muttered some question to which the "Blondine" replied : "No, she says there is nothing the matter."

He did not, however, appear satisfied.

We were now passing along the Altmühl between wooded hills, and meadows which smiled up at the sun through the morning mists, and, with a wave of his hand, Topler said to me :—

"All this poetry is essentially German."

This led to a discussion about the different literatures and languages, and I spoke of my love and admiration for the English. Not daring to look at Violet as I did so for fear of betraying myself or giving rise to suspicion, said that on certain lips it sounded to me sweeter than all others, and that sometimes it was so rapid, limpid and delicate, that it resembled thought itself, in as far as this were possible.

"Listen, listen, listen!" interrupted my friend Topler, addressing Signorina Yves; "does not that please you?"

Violet murmured some unintelligible words.

"She is English, you see?" said Topler, "and I am a rough old owl out of the Black Forest, but I will now become a parrot of good society, and make the introductions in due order!"

All, except Violet and myself, laughed; Topler began searching his pockets.

"I believe I ought to begin with this gentleman who does not speak," he resumed, nodding his head towards his companion, a good-natured, lazy-looking man, who had not indeed twice opened his lips during the journey. "I must, however, first find the Signore's card, because his Italian name, though most beautiful, is more easily preserved in my pocket-book than in my memory! Herr Treuberg," he resumed, when he had found my card. "Signor——, I must practise the pronuncia-

tion of this name ! Signor——, Frau Treuberg, Fräulein Tecla von Dobra and Fräulein Luise, her sister."

Violet still remained ; a direct glance from her eyes said to me : Avoid this comedy ! but it was too late.

"Signor——," repeated Topler, conscientiously, "Signorina Yves." I bowed, and Violet could not do otherwise than bend her head a little.

Fortunately the train then entered into the long tunnel between Pappenheim and Dollnstein, and when we emerged no one paid any further attention to us.

Topler was engrossed in the view from the windows, pointing out to me with excited exclamations the white stones scattered about the green prairies, and finally the sight of an immense rock surmounted by ruins, and with a mediæval wall encircling the cluster of houses at its base, set him beside himself.

"We are nearly there," observed Fräulein Luise, the "Blondine," and then Topler appeared to descend from the skies to earth.

"The bottles ?" he asked. "Have you the bottles ?"

The taciturn individual reassured him ; the bottles were there.

Frau Treuberg, who seemed the one most intimate with my friends in Munich, whispered something in Topler's ear, and he turned to me

full of exultation. "This lady gives you an invitation," he said. "You know what our *Maiwein* is?"

I confessed ignorance.

"Then you will learn to-day! you are invited to lunch with us in the wood."

Frau Treuberg confirmed his words smilingly, and explained to me that the town of Eichstätt is at a distance from the station, and that they intended walking there by a shady path through the woods where they would lunch; by going with them, she added, I would be able afterwards to relate to our mutual friends that I had seen the Bahnhofswald, which was so dear to them.

My mind was so preoccupied watching for the slightest opportunity which any moment might bring me, that if I had not seen it again later I would not have remembered the quiet little station of Eichstätt, at which the train presently stopped in the still green depths of the Franken Jura.

A gentleman gaily greeted by my companions came to the carriage door and assisted Violet to get out, while Dr Topler waved his arms towards him and vociferated something with the greatest velocity.

"My brother!" he said to me between one shout and another. "Toplerus junior!"

We two were the last to get out and the newcomer meanwhile spoke with the ladies

standing by the side of his fiancée who was deadly pale ; he turned to give his brother a helping hand and the latter then introduced me ; we exchanged a salute without shaking hands.

Professor Topler's appearance answered the description I had received from the "Friseur" the day before, but, though his physiognomy showed little intelligence, he had such an expression of timidity and goodness that one's sympathy was at once drawn to him ; he seemed at once the happiest and most embarrassed man on earth.

He did not appear to have gathered much from the introduction and stood regarding me in a half ceremonious, half bewildered manner, until Dr Topler grumblingly pushed him away with both hands, pointing to Signorina Yves who was walking towards the exit without waiting for his escort.

This meeting with Violet's fiancé impressed me most painfully. I felt no jealousy of him, for I saw at once he was one of those men we willingly praise to women as worthy of being loved, knowing well that they will not do it ; the feeling I experienced was akin to remorse, a sort of sudden consciousness of a disloyalty. Ought I not to warn him that I was for him a deadly enemy ? The limpid sincerity of his gaze pierced my heart.

While Dr Topler conducted me to consign my luggage to the omnibus, I heard the sweet

voice, yet fainter than usual, say something which aroused protests and laments, especially from Fräulein Luise.

It seemed that Violet was proposing to renounce the luncheon in the wood, that she feared the weather and was tired. The "Blondine," with almost tears in her eyes, offered the arms of both the brothers Topler to assist her friend. The Professor, who had evidently made great preparations, did not dare to insist, and stood in helpless silence, his gaze wandering from us to his fiancée and thence to his provisions ; the thought of the latter inspired the phlegmatic Herr Treuberg with most unexpected eloquence against Violet's proposition.

I stood a little apart when Topler senior left me to intervene with his usual impetuosity in the dispute ; presently he called out to me that the *Maiwein* would be made and drunk in the wood as arranged.

Fräulein Luise's face sparkled again, she encircled Violet's waist with her arm, kissed her on the shoulder and then danced on before her, trilling and clapping her hands, turning back to repeat in a burst of effusion, two lines, the first of which I would never have understood without Dr Topler's aid :—

"Du, mei flachshaarets Deandl,
I hab di so gern."¹

¹ "Maiden, with the flaxen hair,
Thou art all dear to me."

Before us lay the steep wooded heights of the Bahnhofswald, and it seemed to me that Signorina Yves was already very fatigued ; her fiancé spoke on and on to her, all attention and eagerness, one saw that he was thanking her, excusing himself, longing for an affectionate word.

I have in front of me at this moment some dried leaves and tarnished flowers of "Waldmeister" from the Eichstätt woods.

In the imperishable human mind the beauty and freshness of nature live unchangeable. When I close my eyes I see again the little white flower which Topler senior and Herr Treuberg pointed out to me when we entered the cool shade of the beech trees ; I inhale its delicate perfume in the midst of the strong vital odours of the wood ; I hear the chatter of the chaffinches and the thrushes, and the voices and laughter of the ladies who were on before us, scattered about the green dales in quest of "Waldmeister."

Violet alone I neither saw nor heard as she followed us with her fiancé.

The ladies now appeared on the ridges, and now disappeared into the bosom of the valleys, giving vent to cries of joy over each fresh discovery ; presently they enquired after the fiancés, and Frau Treuberg called to her husband to go and see whether Signorina

Yves were ill, whereupon Herr Treuberg, who had paused to regain his breath and fan himself with his handkerchief, assumed a lugubrious expression, and descended.

"He will not find it easy to come up again," Dr Topler whispered to me. "I must beg you not to take this worthy Herr Treuberg for a type of the German nation!" He waved his hands in the air, gave vent to a short inward laugh and continued. "Take me rather, or, take my brother, although we are very different." He looked back but there was no one to be seen. "The Germans," he continued, "are sometimes as good and as patient as camels, other times they are full of passion like some other more romantic animal, and these two sides of the German character are united in my brother; he looks full of beer but in reality is full of moonshine! While, as regards patience, you will see him come up presently with Signorina Yves on one arm and Herr Treuberg on the other. I am quite different, quite different."

Meanwhile Fräulein Luise and her sister were disputing at a little distance over some flowers which the former had gathered and the latter declared were not real "Waldmeister"; the remarks of the "Blondine" were similar to little bird-pecks, and though she was laughing I saw tears were not far off. They asked Dr Topler to come to them and,

since this only resulted in all three arguing, called also on his brother and Herr Treuberg immediately they had arrived up; I thus remained a moment alone with Violet.

She was intensely pallid and began at once to call Frau Treuberg in her soft voice, which only carried a few paces and then died away.

"Violet," I said, and could speak no further; perhaps, however, I could have uttered nothing more passionate yet humble.

She looked at me for an instant against her will and, though her regard was intended to be severe, love shone clearly in its depths and my eyes must have sparkled for she said hastily :—

"Do you think that your conduct is honourable?" An inspiration struck me, and I cried impulsively, "I will tell him!" "Oh God! No!" she entreated.

Further conversation was impossible but her reply had made me happy; there was an acute sweetness in hearing her thus supplicate me and in knowing that she did not feel sure of her purpose or of the future.

We assembled for luncheon a little way off the path near a round patch of sunshine that lay on the earth amid a wreath of beech and fir trees, under a dome of azure sky.

Herr Treuberg uncorked the bottles of "Rüdesheimer" into each of which one of the

ladies inverted a bunch of the white "Waldmeister," which perished, while infusing its sweet, wild perfume into the wine.

While the others stood round absorbed, as though beholding some sacred rite, I was able to regard Violet, who was seated on the grass holding her closed sunshade in both hands.

Her eyes repeated again that imploring "No!" and mine must have responded a "Yes," because she bent her head and clasped her hands in an appealing attitude. I began to speak about the *Maiwein* with Fräulein Luise.

"The wine and the flower," said Dr Topler, "are two different products of the German soil, and we here blend them into a unique harmony."

Not alone in the *Maiwein*, but in all the silvan scene there was a charm which the secret drama impeded me then from appreciating, but which now returns serenely to my mind.

While waiting for the odour of the "Waldmeister" to pass into the wine, I chatted with Frau Treuberg; she spoke of our mutual friends, recalling times gone by passed with them in the little silent city, and gay parties spent together in that same wood, describing as children those I have known men, and relating family joys and griefs in which she had taken part as friend.

She felt it so strange to be there now with-

out them, to think that they were all dispersed throughout the world; and she could not understand how the woods could be still so joyous, verdant and odorous, and the chaffinches sing as merrily as in the far away days of her youth.

Professor Topler and Herr Treuberg meanwhile unpacked the provisions, and Violet spoke to Dr Topler. I heard the latter speak of the museum, and Kaulbach's picture, and guessed that she was asking him how he came to know me.

Fräulein Luise came treading on tiptoe, her finger on her lips, and beckoned away the two Toplers and the Treubergs in order to show them something. I was again left alone with Violet.

"Do not say anything," she murmured hastily, "until you have spoken with me. Oh, I hope God will give me strength!" She covered her face with her hands for a moment and then resumed. "I see now that it is necessary that we should speak together, therefore come and see me at the Treuberg's house. I will not be false to my engagement, and only propose this because I believe that when you know all you will no longer wish—"

She stopped short, unable to continue, and we passed some moments in silence before the others returned. I knew that nothing could

separate us, yet this allusion to her unknown past filled me with a cruel dread. At the same time, however, the thought that I would soon find myself alone with her, and that perhaps after this last effort she might yield, caused my heart to beat violently.

"Oh, Violet!" cried Fräulein Luise, running towards us, "if you had only seen! Two such dear little squirrels were running up and down a tree, with their tails erect, and they stopped to look at us with their little muzzles and pretty round eyes."

She was very pretty herself, this Fräulein Luise, for the true German *vergissmeinnicht* bloomed in her cerulean eyes, and her alert movements were full of a delicious grace in which some of childhood's playfulness yet lingered, mingling itself with the soft reserve of maidenhood.

She sat down beside Signorina Yves, caressing her and speaking to her in a low tone. I was grateful to her for this tenderness, since even one look of love was forbidden me, and yet for this very reason I suffered watching her.

Violet pressed her hand and kissed her on the hair, then after a little time turned towards me and drew me into their conversation, asking whether I knew the Riviera.

We discovered that, years before, she had been in Bordighera at the same time that I

had been in Ospedaletti, and that during my vesper promenades I must often have seen her seated on the rocks of Capo di S. Ampollo, looking towards France at the sunset.

I was on the point of saying that one evening, inebriated by the view of sea and sky united in one great blaze of crimson fire, I had engraved the word "Love" on the rock. Yet, though it was the simple truth, I refrained from speaking it.

Neither did she tell me then that she had once carved a name, not mine, upon the last of the little palm trees which shade the way when one leaves the pine grove to mount towards Bordighera Vecchia, and what a profound impression it had made on her to find this palm tree blown down by the storm two days later.

We both had walked between Ospedaletti and Bordighera in the heart of January at dawn, and seen the moon hang pale in the western sky above the olive-wooded hilltops ; and, half across the other olive grove, we both had looked through the foliage and seen the long, golden line of the rising sun floating on the sea.

I spoke with a profound agitation, which Violet understood ; her voice became still more subdued and sometimes trembled.

The others hung on our words, and when we ceased Fräulein Luise sighed and expressed her great desire to see Italy, beginning

to recite the verses from "Mignon," and then stopping abruptly.

"*Dahin! dahin!*" exclaimed Dr Topler, brandishing two bottles of Rüdesheimer:—

"*Mocht ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn!*"¹

There was a general laugh, during which Signorina Yves' eyes met mine. Ah! they did not speak as prudently as her lips had done; and though she quickly turned them elsewhere, their sweet electricity had already passed into my very being.

"How beautiful it would be to live there!" the "Blondine" said in a low voice.

"Yes," replied Violet, in the same tone, "but I should like to die here."

"And not to live?" her fiancé said timidly, trying to take her hand, but she withdrew it hastily.

"Yes, yes," she then answered, as though to atone for the repulse, "also to live here!"

Herr Treuberg took at last part in the conversation, expressing the probability of the *Maiwein* being now ready.

The sparkling "Rüdesheimer," so perfumed of woods and spring, was mellow and mild to the palate, but it ran like fire into my breast, where it kindled into flames of joy. Violet's last glance had intoxicated me, and I thought with rapture of the day when I would clasp her in

¹ There, there, would I go with thee, beloved!

my arms as my spouse, my second self, my soul for eternity!

Of the others only Treuberg and Dr Topler drank; out of compassion for the dying "Waldmeister" Fräulein Luise would only sip the wine; she was, however, very generous in pouring it out for us.

As I thanked her for helping me, Dr Topler observed that no people could so readily improvise a toast in verse as the Italians, and suggested that I should compose one to Fräulein von Dobra.

I agreed, and withdrew a little aside; immediately afterwards the fiancés were toasted, and I heard Dr Topler exclaim in an excited voice, "Why don't you clink glasses then? why don't you drink?"

I could not see to whom he spoke, but it was not difficult to guess. My God, how Violet must have suffered, and how painful it was to me to feel this!

I wrote quickly the verses which no one except Signorina Yves would understand, and then nothing would do but that I should myself read them aloud, as they were curious to hear their harmony; I did so and was conscientiously listened to by a group as grave and sedate as the beech and fir trees around; Herr Treuberg alone profited of this opportunity to eat up the last *Wiirstchen*! Except Violet all looked at me as I recited:—

"To thee, fair maid, I quaff the foaming wine
Yielded by white grape in thy native land.
It brings sweet recollections of the Rhine
With flowery banks, where towers and vineyards stand.

"Again I drink, within my bosom now
Beats a new heart with strange poetic power.
I drink, there come as kisses to my brow
Soft zephyrs wafted from some forest flower."

Violet, at their request, translated aloud the verses, making me first repeat each line; at the two last she hesitated and translated *mi bacia* by *ich fühle*, and through this alteration I experienced the exquisite sweetness of knowing that I was understood.

I then admired the perfect ease with which she carried through her self-imposed task of speaking to me and getting me to speak with her; such force of will and intellect were a revelation to me. I had a thrill of proud joy and realised, perhaps for the first time fully, how powerful the union of our two souls would be.

Only once did her love for me cause her to lose command over herself: the conversation turning on literature, they had drawn from me the admission that it was my occupation, and Professor Topler, alluding to my toast, said that henceforth the Germanic Muse would inspire me.

"Oh, no!" Violet had exclaimed, and, as all looked at her in surprise, had then blushed deeply.

Cara! she did not wish me to forsake the art of my country! I thanked her with my eyes, assuring her inwardly that she might be tranquil; and then replied to her fiancé that though, travelling in Germany, the "Rüdesheimer," the "Waldmeister," and the remembrance of great and loved poets might well inspire me for the moment, I would never be guided by any other than the Italian Muse, not even, I added with intention, by the English, although this latter had a veritable fascination for me.

Topler senior, who had for some time been giving signs of impatience, now burst forth, exclaiming that his brother knew nothing about it, and that to carry patriotism into art was unworthy of a German, and with all due respect for me, of a poet also.

"All the poetry," he said, "that is peculiar to you Italians, or to us Germans, is not worth that much!" kicking, as he spoke, an empty bottle away down the slope of the wood.

The professor strove to justify himself, but had not properly grasped his brother's meaning; the latter shook his head and shrugged his shoulders in a frenzy of irritation, then turned to me and paid no further attention to him.

"Geklingel," he muttered, "und nichts weiter!"¹

¹ Empty sound, and nothing else.

"No, no," said Violet smiling, "you have treated that poor bottle too harshly! I think there still lingered in it some perfume of the Rhine, and the 'Waldmeister'!"

She then went on to speak with graceful simplicity of the purely national poetry, of the popular ballads which were so full of natural fragrance, her voice sounding even more melodious than usual; she said she was sorry not to be able to sing a "Lied" for us, and though she smiled saying this, one saw the bitter sadness in her eyes.

Perhaps neither had she perfectly understood the question; we were, however, all of accord against Dr Topler, who for Schiller's "Lied von der Glocke," would have given all the "Wunderhorn."

Fräulein Luise stamped her foot at the affront; to speak against her dear Lieder, which were so charming, "so nett!" Had Dr Topler then absolutely no heart?

Topler junior begged her to sing one.

"Since you have been good, I will, she said, and sang, in a thread of a voice, but with incomparable charm, these verses in dialect, which I received later from her in manuscript; at the time I did not understand a single word:—

"With a snip-snappy,
Dreary, unhappy,
Scold of a wife,
Life cannot be endured.

But only be assured
Of a jolly, lively spouse,
Gay and active in the house,
Such is a life of bliss,
One wants no more than this!"

Fair and dainty, as she sang leaning against the trunk of a tree, her face sparkling with gaiety and malice, she well resembled one of the sportive fays of Teutonic legend.

During the song her sister went silently to gather flowers, and Frau Treuberg, her face somewhat flushed, looked frequently at the two fiancés with a, to me, inexplicable curiosity ; Violet in her turn looked smilingly at the elder Topler, who followed the words attentively with a curious play of expression on his face ; meanwhile the fiancé, as Fräulein Luise was singing for him, scrupulously fulfilled the duty of keeping his eyes fixed on her. He had not a mobile, expressive physiognomy like his brother's, yet I thought I saw an embarrassed shade there. Herr Treuberg, however, notwithstanding his wife's glances, kept on making signs to him, and laughing as if to say that the ballad appeared expressly written for him.

I would have wished to have been able to enjoy with a tranquil heart the charming scene which looked like a copy of some antique German picture ; the pines scattered among the beech trees gave an imprint of northern

sadness to the poetry of the verdure, the flowers and patches of sunshine, and it was not difficult to imagine a peruke behind the subtile, beardless visage of Topler senior and a mass of ringlets on Fräulein Luise's blonde head ; but with the heart I had, the idea came and passed in the same moment.

When the song was over only Signorina Yves said "Bravo!" All the others appeared ill at ease except Dr Topler, who kept silence, continuing to regard Luise with his piercing smile ; I was debating inwardly whether or not to ask the meaning of the mysterious verses, when Frau Treuberg proposed starting, and all rose with a relieved air.

I expected to be able to interrogate my friend Topler, but Violet, softly reproaching him for having abandoned her during the first part of the walk, begged him to remain with her, adding that she would perhaps have need of a second cavalier.

I accompanied Frau Treuberg, and ventured an allusion to the ballad.

"It was very inappropriate, very ill-chosen!" she replied, "all in praise of a very lively, active bride, which our poor friend cannot be."

The "Blondine" had now realised her thoughtlessness, or, more correctly, her sister had made it clear to her. For some time she was silent with mortification, and then hovered

around Violet with a thousand caresses and attentions.

"Poor Violet," murmured my companion, "to-day she walks worse than usual."

After a few minutes we came out into the open, on the nearly flat mountain ridge, where the road to the right leads direct to Eichstätt, still invisible in the next valley, and to the left skirts along the edge of the wood.

The liquid song of a skylark, lost in the serene immensity overhead, reached our ears; Violet paused as if to listen, and the others discussed whether we ought to descend direct to Eichstätt or turn to the left and go down by the "*anlagen*."

"I fear," said Violet, "that I must rest a little at the Parkhaus, I am very tired."

I saw immediately that it was not merely a question of fatigue.

Her fiancé, half distracted, looked from her to his brother, uncertain what to do, and evidently fearful of appearing importunate by too much zeal, while I endured the cruel torment of being obliged to seem almost indifferent.

Violet sat down for a while, and then resumed walking, leaning on the von Dobra sisters; she did not say how she felt, but was obliged to stop every few steps.

Frau Treuberg said in a low tone to the elder Topler that it would be better to send up a doctor to Parkhaus; Topler cast his eyes up

to the heavens and then said to me, "I shall go down with you ; we can first accompany them near the Parkhaus and then descend by the 'anlagen.' "

When taking leave of the party I said to Signorina Yves that I expected to remain some time in Eichstätt, and hoped to see her again later on, in better health. She replied that she was Frau Treuberg's guest ; the latter had already invited me to her house.

We were scarcely alone when Topler, walking along doubled up, with his eyes on the ground, commenced muttering, "Oh, the fool ! Oh, the poor stupid fool !"

I was in too great anxiety to think of asking what he meant, my one thought being to discover means of procuring news of Violet's condition as soon as possible.

I asked him in an assumed tone of indifference whether Signorina Yves was constitutionally delicate.

"Can't you see that ?" he exclaimed angrily, as though I had personally affronted him. "Did you remark nothing ? don't you understand that she cannot walk ? and my brother insists on her marrying him, isn't he insane ?"

"Oh, no !" I exclaimed.

"How no ?" Topler cried. "How no ? when she would marry me more willingly than him ?"

I was obliged to smile.

"It is a fact," he repeated, "for him she has esteem—that goes without saying, for in all Bavaria there are not two such sterling characters as my brothers?—but for me she has sympathy."

I was firm in the determination, expressed to Violet, of making my intentions known, but the time had not yet arrived, and meanwhile, I did not consider it right to take advantage of Topler's ignorance and obtain from him information of a secret nature; I therefore let the theme drop, and we walked on in silence.

We emerged soon from the dense thicket of young beech trees and caught sight of the silent Altmühlthal, and the first houses of Eichstätt, and then I remembered what Violet had said in the Belvedere about the little German town, where destiny called her; I had not, however, been prepared for anything so cut off from the world and its ways, so hemmed in by desolate heights as this, and, when we had almost completed the descent without encountering a single soul, or hearing any sound of animation or labour, and saw the barren mount opposite with its turreted girdle and at our feet the dark towers of the cathedral, I had a feeling as if a sad, solemn doom hung over the place.

Afterwards, however, when we reached the bottom of the valley, where enormous poplars stand ranged along the clear waters of the

river, and passed over the tiny narrow bridge spanning it, the solitary little city appeared less gloomy, and I thought that, as the ancient adage says, a happy life might be concealed there.

It was about two o'clock when we arrived at the door of the "Schwarzer Adler," where my luggage was already awaiting me, and here, after promising to let me have news of Signorina Yves that evening, Dr Topler left me.

CHAPTER XVII

I ATTRIBUTED Violet's indisposition chiefly to the restraint she had put on herself during the day in order to conceal her agitation, and therefore my uneasiness was tempered by the hope that she would speedily recover herself.

Alone in my hotel room I walked up and down thinking my position over, and wondering when I ought to call at the Treubergs, and when it would be wise to tell my story to Dr Topler ; for I had from the first decided that I would speak to him, and now his remarks about his brother's engagement encouraged me farther to do so.

I thought also of my home, of my brother's surprise at receiving a letter from Eichstätt, of the civic positions I held, and which I would be obliged to neglect if the present uncertainty lasted longer.

This latter reflection troubled me, but I argued with myself that in this time, more or less short, it would be decided whether my life would in the future greatly rise or sink in power and ardour for good.

Thus I tranquillised my conscience, as is ever the first endeavour of one who feels it

unquiet ; and although my manner of so doing was one of the commonest and most fallacious, I can assure you that I did it in perfect good faith.

The longing to speak to Violet, and the wish that she might one day know what had been in my heart and mind after our meeting, caused me to write the following in a certain book which was always my faithful companion :—

“ EICHSTÄTT,
SCHWARZER ADLER HOTEL,
May 11th, 1872.

“ CARA,—I am again with you ; I close my eyes and force my soul by a vehement and all-absorbing impulse to fly to you !

“ Perhaps you feel me near and are comforted ?

“ How weak the human spirit is ! Consciousness of the present again overtakes me, and I cannot continue my effort ; I am saddened as though inwardly many wings folded themselves up.

“ I ought to have said : how weak *my* spirit is. Only now do I perceive that egoistical vanity prompted the other expression.

“ My spirit is faint and vain ; the world does not think so, but what do I care for the world ? To you I tell it, to you who love me !

“ I torment myself with the idea that, not-

withstanding my letters, you do not yet realise the poverty of my soul.

"What sweetness, what infinite rest I shall enjoy when you know all, all, and still love me! It will be like a foretaste of the world to come, after the last pardon—my God! I scarcely dare to say this, even to think it to myself!"

"I see you reading these lines after many, many years of happiness together, when all you will have left of me will be remembrance and hope—will one of your tears fall here?"

"O may my verses' spirit prove
A messenger of fire and love;
So that her eyes beloved may see,
So that the goal her heart may be,
Then, fire and love! return to me."

* * * * *

I afterwards went out, hoping to meet someone coming from Parkhaus, but saw nobody; I went through the Rossmarkt, where I had heard that the Treubergs lived, and soon found their house, which was small, low and pretty, with the green ridge of a hill rising above the roof; the only sign of life was that the windows on the first floor were open.

Returning by the Residenzstrasse, I stood in the shade of a garden to listen to the bland voice of a fountain, the only audible sound in the deserted street.

It was Sunday and I had quite forgotten it!

Then the thought came to me that a man ought not to let himself be thus dominated by love, and I remembered some words from a little book, Lord Bacon's "Essays," which I had carried everywhere with me ever since I was five-and-twenty ; I said to myself, however quickly, that the words in the Essay on Love were not applicable to my passion, destined to produce the agave's flower.

Then in my soul all became tumult and discord, all fermented with the transformation that another was working there ; I was dazed by the multitude of new ideas and sentiments which I felt mysteriously evolving within me, even my eyes appearing to see in a different manner.

Towards seven I went out again and encountered Dr Topler, who was coming to inform me of the safe arrival of Signorina Yves, whose attack had been of short duration ; he asked whether I were comfortable at the Schwarzer Adler, and then proposed my accompanying him home.

"I like you very much, Signor Poeta !" he said, suddenly. "What the devil has brought you to Eichstätt ? What ?" he then added, seeing me hesitate, "can one not put such a question to a friend ?"

"I think that I shall tell you the reason," I replied, "but later on, not now."

Dr Topler planted himself like an inquisitive quadruped on his two feet, stick and umbrella,

twisting his head round to look up at me, but said nothing more and resumed his way.

Arrived at the house where he lodged with his brother, near the monument to St Willibald, he asked me to come up, saying : " My brother is at the Treubergs, they expect me also, but I am not going. I cannot endure either the tea or the master of the house ! I saw this morning that you were very fond of music, and want you now to hear some Italian."

Never shall I forget the appearance of the crooked old man, his long nose hovering, now right, now left, over the keys, following the assured agile movements of his hands, while his lean fingers, grasping the notes like claws, and scarcely appearing to move, discoursed a soft, serene, flowing music, with an occasional touch of passion and irony.

Every now and again I exclaimed " Beautiful !" and he smiled, and still playing, asked if I knew who the composer was ; I named one of our old masters.

" Toplerus," he said, when he had finished the piece, " Toplerus senior, village organist ! "

I think I completely won his heart that evening ! His music, though so beautiful, was not very original, and it was probably not difficult for a composer of talent, familiar with the works of our early classics, to so write in their style as to deceive a dilettante. I,

however, thus taken by surprise, was fairly astounded.

Topler was delighted, and played I don't know how many *sonate* and *toccate* for me.

The last piece was a "scherzo capriccioso" entitled "Nonnenschlacht" (The Battle of Nuns), and it was almost dark when the last solemn notes of the piece, representing the hoarse reproaches of the old abbess, died away. Topler had accompanied the music by horrible, dull yelps and comments, and when it was ended I ventured to ask him to clear up my doubt, and tell me whether he were a priest.

"No," he replied, very gravely, "I wished once to become one, but was not worthy."

He ordered a lamp to be brought, also coffee—which was in truth detestable!—with the idea of offering me an exquisite treat.

I felt it was not right for me to thus become so intimate with Topler, but he gave me no choice, repeating what a pleasure it was to him to talk with an Italian, and assuring me that he could agree better with me than with very many of his compatriots.

Shortly afterwards his brother arrived from the Treubergs. Signorina Yves was now quite recovered : her fiancé, however, was much preoccupied and retired almost immediately.

I rose to go, but my old friend would not allow me ; he had observed his brother with close attention and was unable to conceal his

anxiety; he asked me to excuse him for a moment as he feared his brother was not well. When he returned he looked more annoyed than sad.

"Anything wrong?" I asked.

"Oh, no, no, *eine alte Geschichte!* the usual thing!"

We were both silent a while, then Topler finally let me go.

Before returning to the hotel I passed under the illuminated windows of the Treuberg's house and gazed long at the porch I had now decided to enter next day.

CHAPTER XVIII

IT had scarcely struck two next afternoon when I took my way towards the Treubergs' house.

I walked with my head bent, and have still clearly in my mind the shadows the houses cast on the pavement as I went along. Up to the moment of leaving the hotel I had speculated much as to whether I should or not see Violet, and whether she would be able to speak to me, but, once on my way there, I was no longer in a state to think of anything.

I rang and asked for Frau Treuberg ; the maid replied that all the family were out and only Signorina Yves was at home.

My heart leaped, and I experienced almost the same feeling of amazement and of reverent gratitude towards God as when I had re-dreamed my memorable dream, and again later at the Belvedere, when I had heard Violet's sweet voice speaking close beside me.

"Then I will see the Signorina," I replied.

The maid did not ask my name, probably imagining me a friend of the foreign guest, and showed me through an ante-chamber into a room where Violet sat writing, in the com-

pany of two little girls, one reading beside her and the other playing silently with a doll.

On my entrance Signorina Yves looked up and wished me *Buon Giorno* with a faint smile, composedly ; I could not see how she looked as she had her back to the window ; the children regarded me, astonished.

"You are writing ?" I asked, in a tone of excuse.

Violet replied, *sotto voce*, some words in English that I did not quite understand.

"For me?" I questioned.

"Yes," she said, adding "it is nearly finished ; I could not say this to you."

I waited, caressing the little reader. The other child put down her doll and came to lay her head on Signorina Yves' knees. The latter handed me the sheet and then began to kiss and fondle the little fair head.

Standing by the table I read the letter.

If Violet had not the heart to say to me what she then wrote, neither can I bring myself to relate, even to you, *amica mia*, the sweet exquisite words of the original.

She in sorrowful words gave expression to her regret that I had not obeyed her, and again repeated that she only spoke to me now in the hope that after her narrative I would leave her for ever. She then prayed me to have compassion on her, not to utter cruel words but to leave her gently.

I was touched to the depths of my soul. Respiration failed me; Violet also breathed with difficulty and her face was troubled. I stretched out my hands as if to take hers and she hastily indicated the children's presence, from which I understood that otherwise she would have given them to me.

"I promise it," I said to her in Italian, in a suffocated voice. "You believe me, don't you?"

Violet replied also in Italian, "*Si*," and rose.

"Do you think you can speak to me at once," I asked.

She answered again, "*Si*," and, wearied by standing, leant back against the window draperies; I came and stood between her and the children. "And if," I whispered, "after your relation I were to ask you to be my wife?"

Her head was bowed and she shook it a little without raising it or speaking.

"No?" I asked anxiously, "no?"

"You will not ask me," she replied, her sweet voice scarcely audible.

We stood a while without speaking.

"Now!" she said presently, and, approaching the children, seemed to recover her usual serene grace; she gave them an illustrated book, begging them to remain quiet, and then offered to show me an album of views.

We sat down by a table in the darkest corner of the room and Violet opened the book ; in doing so she knocked lightly against a porcelain vase full of gathered roses and a little carnation bud fell on the photos.

Then, in a low tone, Violet commenced her narrative, her eyes fixed on the rosebud, and, speaking, took it up between her hands, which opened and closed with slow convulsive movements, and did not again relinquish the flower.

Never would I wish to repeat here in detail her dolorous story, and perhaps I could not do so even if I would, for many things I did not hear clearly, and she suffered so much in the telling that I did not dare ask her to repeat herself. Besides I endured anguish listening, and a hundred times preferred not to understand everything.

In her youth she had thought that her imperfection would prevent her from ever being loved, and when, in her nineteenth year, words of passion were first spoken to her, she had listened half incredulously and then had responded with such fire and impetuosity that she did not believe it possible she could ever love so again.

Her voice became ever more broken, subdued and troubled as she related all the grievous vicissitudes of her love, pausing when the words were difficult to utter, and never

removing her hands or her fixed gaze from the rosebud ; while within me jealousy, pity, pain, admiration and love were blended in one tumult.

It was the story of one of the most passionate of hearts, of one of the proudest of souls ; yet most just towards the man who had made her suffer, and grand even in her errors and in her disdain—perhaps sometimes faultily scornful—of what public opinion said.

Her love had been suddenly destroyed. I shall not tell how, and her heart had been as though dead until the day she had read my book.

While speaking she did not drop a single tear, but the poor rose perished, petal by petal, and, towards the end, the trembling hands which had destroyed it, wrung themselves deliriously in the air.

I seized them, enclosed them in mine and pressed them to my breast, murmuring some words of comfort, and it seemed to me that all her person became as though electrified, she bent towards me and I thought to see a flash of serenity in her eyes.

At this moment the children called her, “Signorina ! Signorina !”

She withdrew her hands and motioned to them to be silent, but without success, so she had to rise and go over to them, dragging herself along with difficulty. I also rose and

began to walk up and down the room slowly; for, though I had comforted her, my own breast was oppressed by deadly pain. I had taken several turns deep in thought before I observed that Violet was again back at the table sitting with her face buried in her hands.

I approached her asking, "And this marriage?"

She took her hands from her face but did not raise her eyes towards me.

"It is on account of my relations," she replied, "they wished it so much and I am poor, a burthen on them—no—they are kind to me, but I am not their daughter, and it is of course different."

Deep pity filled me on hearing the infinitely sweet voice ring so sadly, and, seeing her pallid look of exhaustion, I thought what unselfish courage she had displayed during the recital and what torture it must have been to her to tell all this to me.

I would have liked to press her head to my heart, but perhaps, even if the children had not been present, suffering and pride would have prevented my doing so; scarcely knowing what I did or said I murmured, "Thank you. God bless and console you!"

She shook her head in silence as if to stifle back some tears and began to finger the scattered petals of the rosebud.

I knew well that my dolorous compassion

and trouble must be terrible to her although prepared for them, and though it was agony to me to feel this, I could not yet speak out the words that struggled in the depths of my soul.

Violet made a gesture as if to throw the rose's petals from her and then, at last, I placed my hand on hers and said tenderly : "No"; while with the other I took out an old envelope and gathered up the crushed rose leaves into it, one by one ; she watched me for some moments in silence and then murmured, "What are you doing?" I could not reply and she did not interrogate me further, but stooped to pick up one stray petal which had fallen to the ground and handed it to me.

"Poor rose!" she said.

I took her hand and pressed it tightly repeating, "Poor rose! poor rose!" her eyes filled suddenly with tears and I continued ; "It will never, never leave me and no rose will ever be so dear to me as this one which has suffered so much."

Violet did not seem to understand what I wished to express.

"I have killed something," she said in a very low tone, "also in your soul, have I not?"

"I think so," I replied, "but something else has taken birth there instead."

This was true; it seemed to me that I had passed through an intense fire, that the moments had been years and that my love and heart had undergone a complete alteration.

"You are now," I resumed, "dear to me in a more sacred, more profound manner and are far closer united to me than you were before."

Her breath came quick and throbbing, but she made no reply. I sat down beside her and murmured in her ear, "Violet, will you give yourself to me for all eternity, in the sight of God and before all men?"

She trembled, seized one of my hands and held it in the same nervous spasm as before, while she whispered with her head still bowed and her eyes cast down, "I cannot! do not ask me, oh! do not ask me!"

The door of the ante-room opened, and Violet had barely time to withdraw her hands before Herr Treuberg entered to say that his wife, who was with a sick friend, sent word to Signorina Yves that she would not be able to return before night.

I promised Herr Treuberg to soon return to see his wife, and took my departure, taking with me a parting look from Violet, a passionate, sad regard in which she for an instant abandoned herself to me and at the same time repeated, "I cannot! I cannot!"

CHAPTER XIX

UNTIL the next morning I felt like one suffering from acute *terzana*, who feels his torpid mind working, and does not know whether it causes him pleasure or pain.

I asked myself whether the agave's flower had really expanded that night at the Belvedere in Lanzo, or was it only now commencing to lacerate my soul with torment and intoxication, in order to emerge from it?

My love for Violet had become more intense; her confession had brought us nearer together than either she or I could have foreseen, and could I ever have thought that there were such tortuous depths in my nature? I had in my jealous anguish to combat against an acute instinct which made me desire Violet still more impetuously because she had been, and had herself, so loved.

In the evening I went to see Dr Topler, but he was not at home, and his brother—whom I was most anxious to avoid—opened the door, and was most pressing that I should enter. I was at first unable to understand such inopportune cordiality, but then I saw that there was something that he wished to ask

me, only that he did not know how to begin ; finally, with much ceremoniousness, he confessed that he had great hope I would aid him to choose some Italian books as a present for his fiancée.

Much embarrassed, I replied that it was not in my power then to oblige him, and that I had only called because I had urgent need of speaking with his brother. Afterwards he must have remembered my words and agitated manner, and understood how I wished not to be, or to appear disloyal.

He was naturally both surprised and mortified at my abruptness, but, with his usual amiability and diffidence, excused himself for having made the request.

I felt how much better he was than I, who had come there to rob him of hope and happiness, and all he had dear in life, and it was almost a consolation to me to remember that Violet had said : "I cannot," and that we had come to no agreement without his knowledge.

The next morning I received the following letter from Violet :—

" Though very weary, I feel it is my duty to add something about my marriage, not having spoken correctly of it in my agitation, a short time ago.

" It was not without due consideration that I gave my promise to Professor Topler.

" I had known him for some time when first

he asked me, and esteemed him because of his thorough honesty and goodness, but not being able to return his love, I had begged him to leave me, and he had submissively obeyed me, continuing however to love me, and to hope on humbly.

"My uncles were much displeased at my refusal, and said so.

"After some time, Herr Topler asked permission to visit me again; I hesitated long before replying, considering well the position I was in with regard to my uncles, on whose bounty I lived, and reflecting that my health prevented me from supporting myself.

"Notwithstanding, however, my great respect and gratitude for Topler, the idea of a marriage with him filled me with invincible horror. I, therefore, asked myself whether his affection, which was really high-souled and generous, would not be content with a fraternal existence and the name of husband, and whether I could not propose such a union to him.

"I finally did so, and my offer was accepted with such joy, that I was mortified to think that perhaps this simple man was nobler than I, notwithstanding my refinement of feeling and intellect.

"This was for me the beginning of a new scepticism, the bitterest of all. I became sceptical about myself. A pious person said

to me that this was good for my pride, and brought me nearer to God. I cannot judge.

" You can see whether it is possible that I should now fail in my promise !

" I fear only too much that I have already failed in part, only too much that I have been weak and even inconsiderate towards you ; I know that I have not even the right to thus confide in you—your threat of speaking to my fiancé forced me to it.

" I do not know whether it will comfort you to know that there is besides a cruel something, which would, in any case, always separate me from you here on earth, and on account of which I could never be more to you than a faithful friend.

" You know how, in my youth, I thought it impossible I could ever be loved because of my imperfection.

" Afterwards I thought that, though I might inspire a caprice, even a passion, no one would ever marry me, and that if anyone were blind enough to do so, the opinion of his relatives and friends, and the first infatuation over, his own judgment, would cause him to repent his action.

" This did not respond to my ideal of love, but I did not blame men for being so base, saying rather to myself, that it was not their fault.

" In accepting Hans Topler's offer, I felt

certain that he also would one day regret it, but I knew him to be so good and generous, that I felt sure he would continue to feel respect and friendship for me, and I did not wish for love.

"Later on, when I had read your book, and met you, the thought came to me that I might perhaps inspire in you a lasting affection, and do you know what I said to myself then?

"Your father died of paralysis at thirty-five, you have lost an uncle and an aunt in the same way, you, yourself, are already marked by fate ; you can never, never, become his ; it would be culpable in us both ! My God, it would be a crime !"

"And now I conjure of you, do not speak to my fiancé, or cause anyone needless pain ; leave Germany.

"Thanks for your tender pity for the rosebud. Addio ! a last addio !

"VIOLET YVES."

I read it again and again, weeping, kissing and rekissing the writing, as though it were her hands, her hair, her eyes, crying aloud : "No, no ! it is not the last adieu, no ! I shall not go ! I love you, and you will be mine ; it is not culpable, it is no crime !"

Immediately I went out, going straight to the Toplers' residence to tell all to my old

friend, but without the slightest idea of what I should say or propose, or what would be the outcome of my visit.

I found no one at home, however; the servant told me that both brothers had gone out with the Treuberg family to Obereichstätt; she thought to see a foundry there, and afterwards to Marienstein, where they would dine; I left a card informing my friend that I wished to speak with him alone on an important matter and would come again in the evening.

After ascertaining where Marienstein was, I started in the opposite direction, towards Parkhaus, with the idea of returning to the wood I had traversed in Signorina Yves' company, and so have as much of her as was possible.

The sky was grey, the air still and tepid: as I write I seem to see again the bench I sat on in the "Anlagen," just where the pathway curves sharply round the hill, while opposite me rose a gentle mound with contemplative trees, and, below, the clear Altmühl flowed through the valley.

With what emotion I drew the envelope containing the rose petals from my pocket-book, and thought out some verses to offer Violet, which finished thus:—

"Now does my love a perfume gain,
Sweet as the eglantine.
That odour ere the night of pain,
Poor rose, alas! was thine."

Perhaps one still can read on the back of the seat the letters "V. Y." Since the days of my adolescence I had not been so childish!

While I was carving the letters the two von Dobra sisters arrived down from above, accompanied by a youthful brother, and carrying much spoil of wood flowers.

Fräulein Luise appeared very glad to see me, and came at once to inspect the letters.

"These are not your initials!" she said candidly, but it did not seem to occur to her that they were her friend's. She knew of the excursion, and gave me an attractive description of Obereichstätt, the quaint little church of Marienstein, and of the beautiful meadows along by the Altmühl.

"It is a pity," she said, "that we are not also there! Violet would amuse herself better."

It seemed to me that her sister disapproved of so much familiarity with me, and that she wished to continue their walk. Seeing her so pretty and graceful, I thought what a pity it was that Topler had not fallen in love with her instead of Violet.

"I am coming, I am coming," the "Blondine" cried impatiently in answer to her sister's signs; "but first I wish to ask you something. Is it not a horror that Violet is marrying that ugly man? Say it, say it, say it!"

She stamped her foot on the ground when I

did not, could not reply ; her brother, however, a lad of eleven years, exclaimed without ceremony : "She is deformed ! no one ought to marry her !"

Fräulein Luise, infuriated, would have struck him, but the lad escaped her, and ran off, crying that his father had said so ; the sisters followed him, the "Blondine" throwing me an "adieu !" as they disappeared from view.

"No one ought to marry her!"—that was the hard prudence of the world, the opinion of the wise, the good and the pious, of all !

Even my own parents, notwithstanding their large-heartedness and elevated characters, would not have judged otherwise ; Violet herself had written : "It were a crime !" and though I, in a first impulse of passion, had cried out : "No ! No !" did I really believe this myself, I who stood alone against all ?

This question I now put searchingly to myself, and decided instantaneously for love, against the world and cruel human prudence.

It may be, I said to myself, that those who draw life from us will suffer, and that we shall suffer in them ; but if those who have as yet no being could choose, would they not accept even a short and troubled earthly existence in order to emerge out of nothingness to understanding and love, so as to rise to a superior and eternal state where earthly miseries cannot follow man ?

No one ought to marry her! As well say no one ought to love her!

Why, then, is she sweeter than any pain could be bitter? Why has she a heart full of passion? Why do I feel that I live in her, that only through her come the glory and power of my life, and that in her alone is there peace to soothe my every sorrow?

I tremble still, while writing, with love and anger, perhaps even against you, *buona amica*, to whom I dedicate these memoirs, for I imagine that you, too, think like the others, and the more adversaries I find before me the higher rises my defiance.

It is no crime! I repeated to myself mentally, and it seemed to me that I clasped Violet to my heart, convincing her with my kisses and assurances that she was my spouse, my very self, my soul and desire for all eternity, and that of this we would render count to God alone, not man!

CHAPTER XX

TOWARDS six the same evening as I was on the point of leaving the hotel, Dr Topler entered.

“Here I am!” he said.

Seeing my embarrassment, Topler knit his brows and assumed the grave air which, in all parts of the world, some people put on when they fear they are going to be asked for money; it is difficult to understand how his warm, open heart came to conceal in its depths a secret point of avarice; but so it was; and afterwards I learned that certain traces of the sun and earth on his black suit were not entirely due to artistic and philosophical indifference.

I hastened to say that the moment had come for telling him why I had come to Eichstätt, upon which his brow cleared and his eyes sparkled with curiosity.

“I owe this confession to you in loyalty,” I added; “but perhaps, when you have heard the reason why I am here——”

“Well?” he asked.

“We shall no longer be friends.”

Topler started, drew himself up and looked at me with elevated eyebrows; it was now

necessary to come to the point and I resumed : "I did not see Signorina Yves here for the first time; I saw her in Italy, and have come to Germany solely on her account."

Topler stared at me as if petrified.

"The other evening in Nuremberg," I continued, "I overheard your conversation outside the café Sonne, and knew therefore at what hour I should go to the station in order to travel with you."

"You did not know then," exclaimed Topler, "that Signorina Yves was engaged?"

"Si, Signore, I knew it; she had told me herself."

"Ah! the Signorina knew you?"

"Si, Signore."

"Oh!"

In this long "Oh!" as well as in the suddenly severe countenance of the old man, there was astonishment and blame.

"Signorina Yves repulsed me," I exclaimed, "and did all in her power to prevent my following her to Germany and afterwards to induce me to leave at once; you could have remarked during the journey between Nuremberg and Eichstätt that, although all the others conversed with me, she did not once address me."

"But then you," Topler burst out, then interrupted himself and made a prolonged guttural noise as if hesitating to speak out

some word ; finally he resumed in a low tone, his gaze wandering here and there about the room ; " I had almost said that you are——"

" That I am mad ? I don't think so."

" I can well believe that !" replied Topler, brusquely.

" I ought also to tell you," I went on, " that notwithstanding Signorina Yves' expressed desire, I shall remain here and do my utmost to conquer her determination."

" And why are you telling all this to me ?" interrupted Topler.

" Because I do not wish to be silent and take advantage of your friendship to covertly gain my ends."

" You have already done that ! and now what sort of conduct is it to persecute a lady who is no longer free, and who repulses you."

" Signore," I replied, " do not judge me, do not——"

" I shall judge you," exclaimed Topler, furiously, " I shall judge you and your actions when and how it pleases me, and I forbid you to remain in Eichtstätt or to further molest my brother's fiancée ! "

" Excuse me," I said quietly, " Signorina Yves loves me."

At this Topler's rage seemed to turn to stupefaction, and, with the index finger of his right hand pointed at me, he stood regarding me with open mouth and did not utter a word.

After some moments a look of comprehension suddenly dawned in his eyes and his face flushed ; he drew from his pocket a large red and yellow pocket-handkerchief, looked into it, muttering : "He is crazy!" then used it noisily, gave a dark frown and, rolling the handkerchief furiously between his hands, blurted out rapidly : "The man is mad ! mad ! mad ! mad !"

"No, dear Signore !" I said, with a certain indignation in my tone. "I am not at all mad."

"What do you mean then?" he retorted irritably. "Did you not say a few moments ago that Signorina Yves repulses you? and now you bring out that she loves you!"

"Excuse me," I said, after a short pause. "The confession I owed you I have now made. Only with a friend would I wish to explain myself further, and I think you will say that henceforth friendship is impossible between us. I can well understand this, and shall in any case always conserve a great esteem and sympathy for you, and if you were disposed to listen to me in a friendly spirit for a last time——"

I paused but he was silent, and when a few moments had passed I rose with a gesture of resignation ; he also rose and took up his hat and stick.

"I thank you all the same," I said,

as we approached the door, "for having come."

He stopped and looked me straight in the eyes, appearing to scrutinise me to the very depths of my soul; then throwing hat and stick on the table, he stretched out his arms impulsively and exclaimed: "Say on!"

In my contentment I was on the point of seizing his hands, at which he drew back a little and gave me a distrustful look.

I pretended not to remark his movement, and began at once the history of my love from the time of my meeting with Violet in the Belvedere at Lanzo.

When I touched on my two dreams in order to explain the effect the first sound of her voice produced on me, Topler nodded his head repeatedly, like a physician who hears his patient relate fresh symptoms which correspond to the diagnosis he has already made of the case.

But as I went on to speak of Signorina Yves' mind, of the bitter sadness of her ideas and of the good I had hoped to do her, receiving still more myself in return, the old man, who till then had stood with his head bowed, raised his eyes to my face, and I could see a vivid interest dawn in them, suspicion disappear and esteem return.

I was silent about the letters which Violet had written me, as well as about her last con-

fidence, only saying that she loved me and refused me in order to maintain the promise she had given his brother.

I added that, on account of the many mysterious signs I had received of the existence of a superior force propitious to me, I had faith that the divine promise made me in the dream would be fulfilled.

Topler regarded me for a moment in silence, and then exclaimed : "And what do you intend to do now ?"

"All that is possible," I replied.

He pressed his hands to his temples, repeating : "*Was fur eine Geschichte, was fur eine Geschichte !*"¹

"Listen," I ventured to say to him. "You did not seem pleased the day before yesterday that your brother should marry Signorina Yves."

"Let that be! let that be! I cannot have said such a thing," Topler muttered, as though stung by some molesting memory, and then remained for some time with his head buried in his hands.

"I am like a father to my brother," he said then in a troubled voice ; "he is all I have, and though he, poor chap, imagines he has God only knows what, as you can well see, when all's said and done he has only me ; and even if I do think this marriage a mistake, I have all the same accepted it, I have accepted it."

¹ "What a state of things!"

While repeating this to himself he became again thoughtful, the inquietude of his person, as well as his forehead and mute mobile lips, indicating an inward contest. After some time he raised his head and again repeated with energy, as though to frighten the occult opposing voices into silence: "In short, I have accepted it."

But the inner voices were not stilled and he relapsed into silence; the rupture of the engagement would have overjoyed him, and he was sorely tempted to give a helping hand to it himself, but the thought of his brother's grief held him back; this last anxiety predominated over every other argument, for though he was brusqueness itself often to his brother and ridiculed what he called his "moonshine," he loved him with almost paternal tenderness.

"See, for example," he broke out suddenly. "You remember the evening before last, that coming out of my brother's room I exclaimed: 'The usual story!' I had found him weeping like a boy because Signorina Yves had been so cold to him! I said: 'You must give her up!' And do you know what he replied? He asked me if I wished to kill him! Now you understand."

Many replies and propositions struggled in my throat but were unsuitable, for one reason or another, to be spoken, some perhaps even to be thought, and I was therefore silent.

Topler also sought feverishly to discover some way of availing himself of this occasion to free his brother without breaking his heart, and finding none, would have liked to ask my aid, but felt that this could not be done with propriety and said nothing.

However, without words or even exchanging glances—for whenever I looked at Topler he always appeared to be studying the walls or ceiling—we, by degrees, came to the same conclusion, namely, that there was no way out of the difficulty, and we both rose to our feet almost at the same instant.

Parting from him, I was going to ask him whether we might meet again and then refrained, not to run the risk of a refusal. Neither did I offer my hand; it was he who made a movement as if to extend his, and then quickly withdrew it again, thinking of his brother.

Thus we separated without any outward sign of friendship, but at heart more bound than ever.

I immediately wrote to Violet: "I have in this moment spoken to Dr Topler. I told him that I love Signorina Yves; that she loves me and repulses me; that God will give her to me."

I took this note at once to the post in the hope that Violet would have it that same evening.

CHAPTER XXI

Two hours afterwards I set out towards the Rossmarkt, simply to look at her windows, walking slowly and avoiding the moonlight as though the rare passers-by could recognise me and read my thoughts.

In the Residenzstrasse I heard footsteps behind me in the deserted street and thought to hear Fräulein Luise's silvery laugh. I turned into the Residenzgarten, and, sitting down by the "Mariensaule," listened to the approaching voices, without however distinguishing Luise's. The party passed and retreated into the distance and soon no sound except the murmur of the fountain was to be heard.

The moon rose in front of me over a long gabled roof with pointed windows, illuminating the elevated statue of Mary, and shimmering over the rose-coloured bloom of the horse-chestnuts swaying in the breeze.

I thought of the far future when that night of passion in Eichstätt, the moonlight, the fountains, the whispering plants and the strange, quaint houses would only be a memory!

As I came on to the Rossmarkt I heard

music and found it came through the Treubergs' windows which were open. With a beating heart I passed under the neighbouring street lamp and went to stand in the shadow of a house close by.

At that moment the music ceased, and three or four people, who had stopped to listen to it, departed.

The night was so calm and clear that I hoped Violet would be tempted to come to the window. No one appeared, however, instead, a baritone voice sang something from Wagner detestably, and then a fresh girlish voice sang Schubert's *Heidenröslein* which I had previously heard sung one mild November day among the last roses of my Italian hills.

Then Schubert's music and Goethe's poetry, both so full of occult melancholy under their simplicity and light-hearted air, had oppressed my heart, now they sent a spasm of jealous pain there, because the *Röslein auf der Heide*, the sweet wild rose, confounded itself in my mind with my rosebud, the rosebud of Violet's bitter narrative.

My God, poor rose! how I longed to kiss it, press it to me and weep over it: rosebud, rosebud, my rosebud, oh not *Roslein roth*, pallid rose!

I could not endure to listen to the end and went away.

CHAPTER XXII

AMONG my papers I find the following verses, undated, which appear to me to have been written that night, thinking of the journey from Nuremberg and the luncheon in the wood.

Before this love came to me I had thought hardly of poets who wrote verses when it seemed to me that art ought to have been quite out of their thoughts ; now I repent having done this.

It may be, *amica mia*, that you will find this metrical interruption in my narrative cold ; it is however true that I then wrote verses as another would have shed tears, through necessity, as an outlet for passion, and without casting a thought on art.

I

“Though others claim my voice whilst thou alone
Keepst silence, this
That in my mind I clasp thee for mine own
To thee is bliss.

2

“I speak I know not what, and suffering smile,
Who speaks to me
I see and hear not ; seeking to beguile
One glance from thee.

3

"Be thine my heart, now comes from heaven above
A voice divine.
It ever breathes soft whispered words of love—
That voice is thine."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE next morning, as I was leaving the "Schwarzer Adler," I came face to face with Professor Topler coming to again ask me about the Italian books; it irritated me to find that his brother had not yet said anything to him and I replied that it was absolutely impossible for me to assist him in the matter and that his *verehrter Herr Bruder* knew why.

"Oh! very well," he said apologetically, "very well!"

Even in ceremonious Germany I do not think there can be another such formal person as Professor Topler, who in naming his brother always prefixed some respectful adjectives! I saw that he thought it would be discourteous to leave me abruptly, but that after this second repulse he did not well know what to say.

"Last evening we had some music at the Treubergs," he said after a pause.

I bowed in silence.

"Fräulein Luise was also there," he added.

I bowed again; he made me a profound salutation and departed.

Fräulein Luise! She had appeared much attached to Violet and this alone made her dear to me ; I would have liked to speak with her about Signorina Yves, but felt uncertain as to whether it would be correct to visit her ; then I remembered that she had asked me for the Italian verses I had composed for her in the Bahnhofswald and resolved to take them to her.

The elder Topler had shown me their house in the Marktgasse as we descended from Parkhaus, and I remembered it well because of a statue of the Mother and Child inserted between two of the windows.

Their mother was dead, Topler had told me, and the two girls lived with their father, who was a member of the Eichstätt "Landesgericht."

It was striking eleven when I arrived there and I found that Fräulein Luise had gone out half an hour before, to call for one of her sisters at the "Volks-schule" in the Benedictine Convent of Sankt Walpurgis.

After enquiring the way I walked towards the convent, but though I encountered many children, there was no sign of Luise ; I therefore went further on through the "Westernvorstadt" and soon discovered her in a meadow by the Altmühl gathering flowers with her little sister.

I asked after Signorina Yves ; she said that she had passed a delightful evening with her

at the Treubergs, and that one of her cousins had sung very nicely and a gentleman from Munich atrociously.

"Your cousin," I said, "sang *Heidenröslein*."

"How do you know that?" she exclaimed, clapping her hands.

I replied that I had passed under the windows; whereupon she reproached me severely for not having come up.

"You were also really needed," she added, "for Dr Topler was most anxious to get the exact address of—" (here she named our mutual friend in Munich) "and Aunt Treuberg could not perfectly recollect it; she thought, however, it was so—" repeating the street and number quite correctly.

I became sunk in thought, wondering what Topler wanted the address for; did he wish to make enquiries about me, and, if so, what was his object?

"Help us to gather flowers," the Blondine said to me, "we can never dine unless we have fresh flowers on the table; to-morrow we have people to dinner and I shall go to look for prettier ones in the wood, also for the "Waldmeister," but to-day I have not time. If you help us, I will take you afterwards for a nice walk, returning to town by those poplars over there, under the Burg; is it not true that our Eichstätt is charming? That big edifice with

the belfry is the convent of St Walpurgis ; this, to the right, is the ' Jesuitkirche ' ; and, further off, to the right, is the ' Heiligegeistkirche ' ; and these meadows, are they not pretty ? ”

She chattered on, plucking flowers and throwing them into her sister's apron, where she made me also put mine, scolding me when the stems were not long enough. I tried to bring her back to the previous topic, asking her whether Signorina Yves were now quite well.

“ I think so,” she replied, “ but she is very sad ; also when my cousin was singing last evening, she looked deadly pale, I thought she would faint ; however, I think there was some mystery going on last evening.”

“ Why ? ” I questioned.

“ Because when I arrived at the Treubergs Violet was so agitated and preoccupied ; though when I asked the cause, she said nothing was the matter ; I then went to Aunt, who told me that Violet had been so since the receipt of a letter half an hour before. Then when the Toplers arrived——”

“ Well ? ”

“ I can't quite explain, but they looked different from usual, and the elder brother scarcely spoke and was so grave ! Yes, yes, yes,” she added, pouting two discontented lips, “ but you are thinking of Violet and are not helping me with my flowers at all ! ”

When the gathering was finished, and each had a large bunch of marguerites, anemones, and gillyflowers, we embarked in one of the rough fishing boats and were ferried across to the other side of the Altmühl.

Luise pointed out to me from the river the house that Professor Topler was preparing for his bride, and told me that Signorina Yves had already been to visit it and was going again that day; I further gathered from her remarks that Violet's stay in Eichstätt would be much shorter than it had been first intended.

This ought not to have surprised me, but it gave me all the same a pang; Violet evidently wished to escape me, and if Dr Topler did not now speak to his brother, what could I do?

A moment before my heart had been full of hope; now I feared I had deluded myself.

The lively Fräulein Luise must have been little satisfied with me, for I gazed abstractedly into the water instead of showing myself an attentive cavalier, or at least admiring her quaint little city nestling in the valley, with its procession of poplars by the river, and high above, the phantom-like ruined Burg.

Finding me so preoccupied, she also relapsed into silence until, nearing the city, she stopped to gather some odorous leaves, saying she wished to bring Violet some of her favourite

sweet briar, and then asked me whether I were coming to the Treubergs that evening.

I had intended going, but what she had told me made me hesitate.

Probably Dr Topler was only awaiting a reply from Munich to take some decisive resolution and perhaps speak to his brother ; my presence would therefore be inopportune and might only hasten Violet's departure ; I replied that I was not going.

I accompanied her home, where she introduced me to her father, a very affable personage, who appeared blindly devoted to his pretty daughter ; they invited me to tea next evening.

" You will enjoy yourself," Fräulein Luise said to me with a smile, " our tea is excellent ! "

I felt that I coloured hotly, for though on her lips the smile was her usual amiable one, it was otherwise with her eyes, which said teasingly and clearly, Come, for you will see Signorina Yves !

CHAPTER XXIV

NEXT evening, about nine o'clock, I set out for the von Dobras. I had seen no one during the day ; Herr Treuberg had called at the hotel to leave a card on me, and I had received a letter from my brother in which he jestingly related the report current in my native city that a *galante* object had occasioned my journey. This irritated and disgusted me more than I can express ; how on earth had such a rumour got about ? I felt angry even with my brother on account of that odious word, *galante* !

These ignorant, gossipy people profaned my love ! and for the first time I felt horror at the thought of making Violet known to my fellow citizens, should she indeed ever become mine ; the idea that our love and her person might be made a theme for talk and jest was intolerable to me.

I found the sisters von Dobra alone with their father ; Fräulein Luise seemed less merry than usual, but her sister, whose voice I had scarcely heard before, spoke incessantly, and every now and again glanced at me with an expression which I thought was curiosity ;

once, while she spoke with her father, Fräulein Luise said to me almost in a whisper, "The tea will not be as good as I thought."

Shortly afterwards other guests arrived whom Luise introduced to me as *Heidenröslein*, her mother and her brother, with the further remark that the latter was the only thorn the lovely rosebud had.

After more jests and laughter, Fräulein Heidenröslein demanded, "And Signorina Yves?"

"Is not coming," replied Luise's sister, and added, regarding me, "We are all so disappointed!"

The "Blondine" gave her a reproving look.

"Dr Topler, however?" the cousin again questioned, "I am so anxious to hear him! they say he plays chiefly with his nose and knees!"

"I do not think he will come either," Luise replied.

There was no longer any doubt but that I must be the cause of their absence, and that the von Dobras knew this. Who had spoken? and what had passed between Signorina Yves and the Toplers? Did they wish to avoid me or one another? Nothing appeared impossible to my excited imagination, and not to know anything, not to be able to hear anything, was torture.

Herr von Dobra spoke to me ; it may have been about Italy or it may have been about the sandwiches his daughters had prepared ! God only knows the manner in which I listened and how much I understood ; I must even now smile when I think of my absurd replies and his astounded expression.

When tea was over, the cousin, whose name I do not remember, sang *Heidenröslein*, and this time I was obliged to hear it out ; it made, however, a different impression on me, or, more correctly, I scarcely noticed it, so completely did the suspense I was in engross my mind.

Then she sang again, among other things a long duet with her brother, during which Luise sat down by me and said in a low voice :

"I have a message to give you from some one, but now it is impossible ; every morning I go to the Benedictines about half-past ten and then into the meadows."

Later on she found another opportunity to say to me privately, "I think she is leaving to-morrow."

On hearing that Violet had charged her with a communication for me my surprise and agitation were unutterable. As yet I felt neither joy nor alarm, for I could not guess what its import would be ; but when I heard of her imminent departure, together with a

sudden fear, there rose within me, prevailing over all else, the old faith and indomitable determination to conquer.

I recovered my composure, complimented the singer, jested with the daughters of the house, praised Italy and the sandwiches to their father, and took leave of all with a smile on my lips.

Oh, Germanic moon ! how sublime, how spectral thou wert that evening, rising in front of me amid the gabled roofs of Eichstätt !

The night, the solitude and the silence soon soothed my soul, and some verses, composed months before as I strolled at midnight through my native city, rose spontaneously to my lips :—

I

“ No other step the dreary street
At midnight echoeth there ;
I wander on with weary feet
And a heart oppressed with care.

2

“ Over each Gothic dwelling
The silvery moon appears,
While still is my bosom swelling
As vexed with a grief of years.

3

“ Oh moon ! with thy splendour of light,
That riseth o'er tenements tall,
I see in thy radiance of white
For me bitter fortunes befall.

"For thou art alone in the sky,
And all its grand glories are thine.
As a poet I never shall vie
Till some of those glories be mine."

I traversed the Rossmarkt; the Treubergs' house was quite dark, and the reflection that next evening Violet would not be there, and that perhaps I should not know where to follow her, caused me an acute but brief throe of agony.

Returning to the hotel I passed the greater part of the night by the window, trying to divine what had happened during the day, and what would succeed on the morrow.

My window had a side view of St Willibald's fountain, where, in the brilliant moonlight, the statue of the venerable bishop looked fantastically life-like, and, little by little, the blessing he is represented as giving mingled itself with my dreams.

CHAPTER XXV

AT ten next morning I was already outside the Westernvorstadt; at the hour she had named, Luise appeared, looking very pale and serious and almost as agitated as I was.

In anxious expectation I waited for her to speak, for I had suspected the previous evening, and now her face assured me, that she knew all.

She regarded me, surprised, alarmed, I thought, at my aspect, and hastened to say that she had only a greeting, an adieu, for me.

I felt that she had more to confide in me and did not know how to commence, but could not find any means of helping her, or anything better to say than, "A greeting from Signorina Yves?"

She did not reply to my question, but said instead, in a low hurried tone, "I am attached to Violet, and it grieves me that she should marry Professor Topler!"

I forgot that we were in the street, and taking one of her hands, pressed it; a quick flush passed across her face and she withdrew her hand; I excused myself, which caused her to blush still more.

"What I am doing," she said, "is all my own idea, and no one must know of it, ever, ever! Promise me that you will never speak of it to anybody!"

Poor child, if her mother had been living, probably even I should never have known anything of this idea! As it was, she followed the promptings of her warm heart and imaginative little head; nevertheless she hesitated somewhat, nervously afraid, like a lad riding a high-spirited steed, enjoying it, yet trembling.

"Promise me also this," she added after a pause, "and give me your word to be sincere with me. Do you think badly of me, do you believe that it is foolish of me to mix myself up in this affair?"

"No, no!" I exclaimed.

"Because," she said, "at home they would certainly think so; I have, however, confidence in you."

In truth I do not know how the child came to trust me whom she scarcely knew, and certainly her action was not conformable with worldly wisdom, as I confess I thought even then when she said, "I have confidence in you"; I now feel a touch of remorse that I kept my opinion silent, and with throbbing heart begged her to speak out.

"I wish my friend to be happy," she said, blushing again, "and I think I understand how she could be so."

I joined my hands in silence, an overpowering sense of gratitude and tenderness depriving me of my voice.

"I have heard all from my aunt, Luise resumed; "Violet told me nothing except that she was going to leave this evening, and that if I saw you I was to give you her 'adieu'; at the time I knew nothing, and therefore expressed much surprise at this abrupt departure, whereupon she embraced and kissed me, saying, 'Dear child!' no more. I love Violet with all my heart, but she always treats me so, 'Dear child, dear child.'"

I saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"She is wrong," she continued, "but it does not matter. I then spoke to my aunt, and saw that she knew but did not wish to tell me. Poor Auntie! when I wish it!" and now her blue eyes sparkled with malicious pride.

She then related to me that Dr Topler, after he had requested her aunt to make inquiries about me in Munich, had himself interviewed Violet, who had shown herself determined to keep her promise with the professor, and had even warmly begged that the whole affair should be kept secret from him. Then Topler had sought counsel with Frau Treuberg, who considered that if Violet showed a resolute mien, I would be obliged to give in, and all could be concealed from his brother. It was therefore decided that Violet should, on some pretext or

other, immediately leave for Nuremberg. Dr Topler, who was new to such dilemmas, alternated between states of intense wrath and extreme depression, and finally got quite bewildered, and let himself be completely guided by Frau Treuberg, who was a good creature, but not wisdom personified, according to her niece.

"And what?" I asked dazedly.

Luise looked at me with a penetrating regard which humiliated me and revealed all at once the woman in the child.

It said, Can you ask me? Is it possible you do not understand that you must follow Violet? What sort is your love, then? No words could have said this more clearly than her eyes did.

"I know!" I exclaimed, before she could open her lips. "Never will I acknowledge myself vanquished! I thought, however, that you had something more to say to me."

Luise recalled her little sister, who during our conversation had been playing by the river.

"No," she said then, "I have nothing more; that is," she added quickly, "there *is* something more, but it is not necessary that I should tell you this."

I conjured her to tell me all, all.

"No," she said, resuming all at once her teasing gaiety, "I shan't tell you; I shan't tell you!"

It seemed to me that she persisted partly to amuse herself, and partly because her spirit rebelled fiercely against even a shadow of compulsion. I read on her face that she would not have yielded to a king.

"You must not imagine," she added, "that because I have told you so much, I shall tell you everything. And now I must return alone to the city; I warn you that Violet leaves at half-past four."

I thanked her for all she had done for me, for the unknown as well as the known; she, however, declined my thanks, saying she had only sought to help her friend, and that she could not endure Herr Topler, with all his tiresome goodness that people were always praising. That a man so old, so awkward, so "plump" should want to marry Violet Yves; but it was the stupid uncles in Nuremberg who were most to blame.

We separated; she returned to the city, and I strolled for a while through the meadows, trying fruitlessly to imagine what the unspoken *something* could be.

CHAPTER XXVI

ALTHOUGH I was quite decided on following Violet to Nuremberg, out of due regard for her, the Toplers, and I might almost say for myself, I did not intend to do so too openly by travelling in the same train with her. I wished, however, to see her even from a distance as she was leaving, and remained in the vicinity of the station until the hour of departure.

Omnibuses, carriages and pedestrians arrived. Signorina Yves, however, did not come, and, when the train had left, I walked to Eichstätt by the high road without meeting anyone. I did not know what to think, and went on to the Rossmarkt, where I saw the two Toplers hurriedly enter the Treuberg's house, recognising the elder by his umbrella and stick.

I returned to the station in time for the train leaving for Nuremberg at twenty minutes past nine, but no one came.

From my Journal

"Why have you not left? I am hopeful, hopeful!"

"And what if you were ill?"

"I put down my pen, and, burying my face in my hands, destroyed all sense of time and place in order to gain peace, imagining myself with you as my bride, no matter where or when, smiling over these past anxieties.

"Returning from the station I walked in the shadow ; the moon shone on the other side of the valley.

"Do you remember that night at the Belvedere when we stood in darkness and the moon illuminated Lugano, the mountains in front of us and the peaks of my rock ?

"Then the moon made me delirious ; now it does not.

"Then we sat close together, and yet how far asunder !

"Now we are apart, we cannot hear or see one another, and yet are so united.

"I feel like a seafarer who, from the deep, sees close at hand, but beyond raging waves, the roof of his dwelling.

"How to arrive at you, I do not know, but press ever onward with extended arms.

"Perhaps when I am yet nearer I shall lose sight of you altogether, and shall suffer, fearing to lose you. I can then only throw myself forward in one last effort, so that, if I must die, it will at least be in your arms.

"And what if you are ill ?

"There are nervous, delicate beings who, in my position now, would be warned by an

inner voice, and would have knowledge of all that you suffer; my nerves are obtuse and mute.

"Fräulein Luise told me that you love sweet-briar, and I gathered some leaves of it as I returned to the hotel. Their fragrance speaks to me of you and of your dear person. Once at the Belvedere, and here also, on the day the poor rosebud perished, I inhaled the faint perfume of your hair, and it resembles this.

"The soft name of 'sweet-briar' also pleases me and brings to my mind your green country surrounded by the sea.

"If I could not live in Italy with you, I would like a little cottage, covered with roses, among the hills of your 'merry England,' facing the ocean.

"What a dream! I would make the sweet-briar grow up to our windows, and should have no further desire in the world.

"'For in my mynde of all mankynde
I love but you, but you alone!'

"Do you know that even before I met you no popular song of my own country, no German 'Lied' was ever as dear to me as this old English ballad?

"I feel so sad and need you so much. I should like to go to the window and call out into the night, 'Violet! Violet, darling!'"

CHAPTER XXVII

EARLY the next morning I received the following note :—

“ Fanny Treuberg, *née* von Dobra, regrets not to have been at home when Signor —— called some days ago, and expects him to-day, Sunday, after eleven o’clock.”

On the stroke of eleven I rang the bell of the Treubergs’ house ; there is not a person in the world who, in my place, could have waited an instant longer.

I was shown into the same room as on the previous occasion and asked to sit down. Frau Treuberg would come in a minute ; I did not dare ask after Signorina Yves.

The album of views lay as before, the vase was also there, but without roses this time, only the chairs were not in the same places. Approaching the table I seemed to breathe again the perfume of her hair and to press her icy hands to my breast.

Frau Treuberg entered.

“ My husband is in bed since yesterday,” she said ; “ it is nothing at all serious, but he is very nervous, and likes me to be always in the room.”

I was at a loss to understand what this exordium signified, and made a gesture at once in excuse for having come and to take leave.

"But no, but no!" she exclaimed. "I must speak with you; please sit down. My God, I don't know how it is best to begin."

I sat down in silence.

"You can probably guess," she resumed.

"Yes, Signora," I replied, "I can well imagine what you have to say to me."

"This is what has happened," she then began. "Great heavens! it has been such a succession of events, and even this conversation with you seems so strange to me. Added to everything else comes my husband's illness. It is really enough to make one lose one's head! Well, then, listen! You spoke to Dr Topler?"

"Yes, Signora."

"The poor man came here on Thursday morning quite beside himself and spoke with Signorina Yves, who was quite open with him about you, but said she intended keeping her promise to the Professor, and prayed that nothing of this would be told to him.

"Topler consulted me, and—I will be quite frank with you—my advice was to follow Signorina Yves' wish and say nothing to his brother; it was decided that she should leave yesterday at half-past four and I was to have accompanied her. We had received disquiet-

ing news regarding the health of the uncle who had been in Italy, so the Professor was told that the return to Nuremberg was on his account.

"Then yesterday, before my husband fell ill, Dr Topler arrived here, panting for breath and utterly bouleversed, to say that something unexpected had happened, that the departure should be put off because his brother knew everything."

"He knows?" I exclaimed, my heart throbbing with hope, not so much at the news itself as at the way in which Topler had announced it.

"Yes," she replied, "the Professor learnt all through a letter which he received yesterday morning from someone who did not wish their name made known; he would not, in fact, tell it, only assuring us that you had not written it."

Luise!—I thought with an inward flash of gratitude—Luise's secret!

Frau Treuberg continued to relate that Dr Topler had further come to say that his brother was firmly resolved to speak with Violet as soon as he felt equal to doing so.

"The old man," she said, "was terribly agitated and appeared quite astounded that his brother had survived the blow; he could not remain an instant still and rushed off immediately he had given his message. I ought

also to tell you," she added, after a moment's hesitation, "that Dr Topler saw here a letter from Munich in which you are much spoken of, and in a manner to convince one that a girl would be really fortunate——"

I interrupted her; she said, however, that this letter had had a good deal to do with Topler's perturbation.

"Some hours later," she then continued, "he returned with his brother——" A bell rang. "My husband!" she exclaimed. "I must go to him, but I shall not be an instant."

After an immense delay she returned exclaiming: "Oh, these men, these men!" and then wandered off into a stream of idle complaints about her husband's unreasonableness, forgetting that I was still on the rack of suspense.

Finally she resumed the thread of her discourse: "I wish you could have seen them! Our acquaintance with the Toplers is of recent date, especially with the elder. It is with the Yves family we are intimate, so that though the Professor is an estimable man, this marriage was little to my liking. Yesterday, however, the poor men really touched my heart! The Professor looked like a corpse, and behind the spectacles one saw his eyes were red. You know he is never handsome and can imagine! He did not open his lips, and it was altogether truly

pitable to see a man of his age and figure in such a state.

"Dr Topler, however, moved me still more. One saw how he suffered at seeing his brother thus, and that he did his utmost to hide his own trouble and appear tranquil ; he spoke for both, and you should have heard the tender tone of his voice whenever he addressed his brother and seen the solicitous glances he cast, half surreptitiously, at him every instant !

"When the Professor went in to Signorina Yves, one saw what a sacrifice it was to the Doctor not to accompany him. He let him go alone, however, and remained with me. Every now and again he clasped his hands, raised his eyes to heaven, and went to the door to listen for his brother's return.

"What passed between the Professor and Signorina Yves I do not know, but when, after a considerable length of time, he reappeared he looked more upset than ever, and his brother took his arm and led him immediately away.

"I was not able to go at once to Violet because my husband had meanwhile been taken ill. When I did go to her she told me that, though it had been her earnest wish that everything should be kept from her fiancé, when he had interrogated her, she had not been able to deny the truth ; she did not know what the Professor would now do, but in any

case she would desire to return to Nuremberg as soon as possible.

" You can imagine the general confusion ! Yesterday there was only the half-past nine train ; with my husband in bed I could not accompany her, and never would I have allowed her to go alone ! We had just arranged that she should leave this morning with my brother and niece Luise, when a letter arrived from the fiancé setting her free."

" Ah ! " I exclaimed.

" Listen, Signore," Frau Treuberg resumed with a certain embarrassment. " I can understand your joy, and as Violet's friend I think I could also truly rejoice ; but I do not know whether Signorina Yves, although certainly well disposed towards you, will at present accept your offer of marriage. I therefore sent for you to say this : do not for the love of heaven go immediately to Nuremberg or present yourself to the Yves family as a suitor ! You do not know the Yves ; it would bring misfortune on our friend."

" Misfortune ? "

" My God, yes ! the uncles were so set on this marriage with Topler ; and I fear only too much that, on the other hand——" she interrupted herself here.

" That I should not please them ? " I asked.

" What can I say ? " the poor woman exclaimed. " They would be in the wrong ;

but I fear it would be so. Violet's mother was a Roman, a sweet creature! but I could not say that she and her brothers-in-law had two ideas in common, and they imagine all Italians are alike; there is besides the question of religion underneath."

I asked her to explain her last words.

Violet's mother, a Catholic, had married William Yves, who was a Protestant, with the compact that, should there be children, the girls should be brought up in the Catholic and the boys in the Protestant religion; it was said, however, that before he died William Yves had embraced the faith of his wife, who preceded him into eternity with this hope. This the Yves believed, and attributed it to Italian proselytising, which made them very bitter against Catholics.

Here Frau Treuberg told me that Topler was a Protestant, which caused me much surprise, remembering the scruples of my old friend and his respectful reserve with regard to Rome and the Pope.

I said so, and she replied that as to Dr Topler no one could say for certain what he was.

I promised Frau Treuberg that for a few days at least I would not show myself in Nuremberg, and after thanking her I took my leave.

Hurrying to the hotel I wrote to Violet. I

have not found this letter again ; it was an outburst of joy and an attack on the last obstacle which separated us. I announced also my intention of leaving in a few days for Italy, where I would put my affairs in order in anticipation of a longer absence.

I wrote thus, but to be quite sincere I ought to have said that if I made two or three days' delay it was to await Luise's return, and not simply that I might express my gratitude to her !

I felt sure that she would bring me at least a greeting.

On Monday morning I went to enquire for Herr Treuberg in hopes of hearing something of Luise. I had previously been to the von Dobra's house, where I heard that the elder Fräulein von Dobra was with her aunt ; the maid could not tell me when the others were expected back ; Frau Treuberg said that they would probably return that evening, and I had not been seated there ten minutes when Dr Topler entered in his usual state of tumult and with flashing eyes.

I rose to take leave.

" No, no, no ! " he said, signing to me to remain ; then, having greeted Frau Treuberg, he came towards me with a serious expression and outstretched arms.

" *Addio, caro !*" he said, and embraced me without hesitation.

We then spoke of music, of Eichstätt, of Eugène Beauharnais, of König Ludwig, of all, in fact, except what was in our hearts.

All at once he asked me whether I expected to remain long in Eichstätt.

"I leave to-morrow evening," I replied.

He made no comment, and the conversation then turned on Fräulein Luise ; something in Topler's smiles and Frau Treuberg's somewhat severe expression made me suspect that her secret had been discovered, and, fearing that the discourse might take an undesirable tone, I rose.

Dr Topler left with me, and descending the stairs, asked, in a very friendly but grave manner, whether he would find me at home that evening ; I replied in the affirmative ; we shook hands and parted.

At nine o'clock he came to the "Schwarzer Adler," and, taking me by the arm, said in a resolute tone :—

"You must come with me."

I asked : "Where ?" but he refused to tell me, repeating : "Come with me, come with me."

I thought that perhaps the von Dobras had returned, and that he knew of some message for me, but I found that it was in the direction of his own house he was leading me.

Could this be possible? When there was no longer room for doubt I stopped short,

uttering an interrogative: "But?" "It is necessary," he replied imperiously, grasping my arm again; "it is necessary!"

"But it is impossible!" I cried in amazement; I do not believe any man ever found himself in a similar difficulty; as things were, to present myself before Professor Topler was nothing short of an aggravating insult! his brother could not certainly wish this. What, then, was his object?

He gave no explanation, but, repeated: "Come, come, I tell you it is necessary!"

"But your brother? Is he there?"

"Certainly."

"And does he know that you are bringing me to his house?"

"Of course, of course, of course!" he exclaimed impatiently. "He knows and expects you; it is necessary!"

Well, then, I thought, if they wish it, it is their affair, and so let it be.

When we arrived, Topler showed me into the music room, where I remained alone for about a quarter of an hour. Every now and again I heard my friend's voice in the adjoining apartment, but could not distinguish the words.

At last the door opened, and Dr Topler entered, his brother following him hesitatingly.

The shade on the lamp prevented me from

seeing his face clearly. I bowed in silence, and did not even see whether he returned my salute or not.

Topler senior led him to an arm chair and installed him in it.

When he was seated I saw him distinctly, and for the first time noted his singular resemblance, not to the monk in Nuremberg, but to another afflicted friar in a certain satirical print which I possess.

The alteration that profound sorrow had wrought in his appearance, which rendered him grotesque to the eyes of the world, now made him pathetic and sacred in mine, and I would have seemed contemptible to myself if I had felt even the slightest inward tendency to ridicule.

"You wish to speak with Signor——, don't you?" Topler senior said to him affectionately, and on the other's assenting by a gesture, he turned to me saying: "He has something to say to you."

He then rose and closed a window through which a draught might possibly reach his brother, and questioned the latter as to whether all were now right before sitting down again.

A long silence followed.

"Well, brother?" finally suggested Dr Topler.

The Professor delayed some instants before

replying, and then said : " Let you speak for the present."

His brother fumed and grumbled : " Was it not all arranged ? Well," he added with a sigh, " I shall begin, and you can correct me if I make a mistake."

Then, addressing me, he continued :—

" Listen ! my brother believes that he is morally bound to make you this communication. Under the present circumstances everything would truly have advocated that it should be made indirectly through me, or, at all events, by letter. My brother, however, was unwilling to write certain things, and would not tell everything, it seems, even to me.

" You see that my position was to have been simply a passive one.

" I can understand, however, that my brother has not the courage to open the subject, which, needless to tell you, relates to the person whose connection with my brother has undergone a change during the past few days ; it concerns, in fact, this lady's health. Before leaving for Italy last year she had a somewhat serious illness, it was in May, I think. Is that correct, Hans ? "

" In April," the Professor replied almost in a whisper, " the 22nd of April."

" Good," proceeded Topler senior. " On the 22nd of April, and after she recovered, her physician requested an interview with my

brother——” Here he interrupted himself, and regarding the Professor, who had covered his face with his hands, asked : “ Will you continue ? ”

The other shook his head.

“ And said,” resumed Dr Topler resignedly, “ that he wished to warn——”

“ That it was his duty”—a subdued voice corrected from the arm-chair.

“ Great God ! ” ejaculated Dr Topler, wrathfully ; then quickly recovering himself, he corrected his words with unusual mildness. “ Quite so, caro ! that it was his duty to warn my brother that, though the lady’s health did not inspire inquietude at the present moment, there were serious menaces for the future, especially considering”—he paused as if uncertain what to say, and looked at his brother.

“ You can let that be,” the latter murmured ; “ that is not of consequence ! ”

Topler senior did not seem to understand his brother’s scruples and regarded him astounded.

“ If,” I said, “ it concerns the family antecedents, you can speak out for I am aware of them.”

“ Since you already know there can be no harm in my speaking,” Topler resumed with an exculpatory glance at his brother. “ Just so : especially considering the family antecedents. The doctor, however, added that, in

his opinion, the danger may be averted for very many years to come if excessive agitation, whether of joy or sorrow, be avoided ; for the Signorina a quiet, uniform life is essential—any violent emotion would probably prove fatal."

I listened shuddering ; what I heard did not astonish me, for, unconsciously, the physician's apprehensions had also occurred to me ; I had not, however, ever allowed my mind to dwell on this terrifying thought.

" You may be called," Topler concluded, " to watch over the Signorina's health and can therefore understand why my brother wished——"

I expressed my thanks, and demanded whether they had anything further to tell me, on which the Professor regarded his brother, saying something under his breath ; the other rose, only half convinced, it appeared to me, and went grumbling out of the room without saluting me.

" Excuse me," the Professor then began, " but my revered brother not knowing . . . could not . . . it was something arranged between the Signorina and myself . . . "

He had probably prepared a long speech, but through agitation and natural shyness lost himself in the first phrase and gave up the attempt.

" In short," he said, flinging out the conclusion hastily and without looking at me, " with me her life would have been more secure."

More secure? What a vision of horror he thus raised before my eyes!

"That," I exclaimed, "lies in the hand of God!"

The passion in my cry seemed to communicate itself to him.

"Yes, Signore," he responded, springing to his feet, "it is true it would be more secure! this you cannot understand!"

I knew only too well what he wished to insinuate, and thought his jealousy was revenging itself by trying to poison the future for me.

I interrupted him in anger, accusing him of this.

Convulsed and deadly pale, he protested a denial; I retorted and he answered back.

Hearing our raised voices Dr Topler bounded back into the room, rushed between us and, seizing our arms, abused both, shouting at me that I was indeed worthless if I misjudged the most generous heart in the world; shouting at him that he was a fool, twice, four, ten, a hundred times a fool!

As we became calmer, he also grew pacified, descended to less furious reproofs, to milder words and to excuses.

Finally he held out his hand to me, embraced his brother, and then paced up and down the room, rubbing his hands and muttering to himself, with knit brows, but in an accent of

profound satisfaction : "We are all three *galantuomini!* all three good fellows!"

I left immediately ; he insisted on accompanying me to the foot of the stairs.

" You allowed yourself to get into a passion," he said, taking leave of me, " but my brother is more than a saint ! I, in his place, would either have killed myself or have killed you. I am talking nonsense, but, in short, you understand ! To-morrow I shall carry him off to the Schwarzwald, where I shall cure him ; I have another bride ready for him there, quite a different sort ! "

Here Topler, with his arms akimbo, went through a mimicry I would not have expected from him.

" Good luck !" he said.

Amica mia, for whom I write these memories, do you not think that Hans Topler was superior to me ? Then I suspected it, now I am sure of it—he was one of those last who will one day be first.

That evening I was unjust, even insolent to him without justification or excuse, and I would like you to know that I accuse myself.

God knows that afterwards I was grieved and reproved my nature, always ready with fine words and rich in noble feelings in the abstract, but weak and ungenerous when tested in real life.

Next day I went to visit the von Dobras

and saw Luise, but not alone. She seemed depressed, and though she greeted me amiably, was much more reserved than usual ; she gave no sign of having anything private to say to me. Her father appeared embarrassed, and no allusion was made either to the journey to Nuremberg or to Violet.

Every subject flagged and I soon rose, saying I was leaving for Italy and would see our mutual friends at Munich, *en route*.

"I suppose you will never again come back to Eichstätt?" Luise asked.

"It is not likely," I replied; "I shall, however, assuredly return to Germany, and that soon."

"Bravo!" she said in a low tone, and this was the only significative word I received from her ; then, notwithstanding the marked silence of the father and sister, she added : "Think sometimes a little of us."

I never saw Luise again and have no idea where she is at present, or hope of ever meeting her again, unless it be in the land where Violet dwells ; but I have not forgotten and never shall forget her, even for a moment, the dear "Blondine" !

At my request she gave me, in return for my toast, the verses she had sung to Violet in the Bahnhofswald ; these I keep among my most precious souvenirs, together with the leaves of the "Waldmeister," and how often I take out the lines and read with tenderness :—

" Maiden, with the flaxen hair,
Thou art all dear to me ;
E'en for thy flax, oh maiden fair !
A spinning-wheel I'd be."

Never shall I forget the graceful singer of the wood ; still less the flowers gathered by the banks of the Altmühl, the little salon of the von Dobras, and the impetuous maiden who dared so much for Violet's sake. May she have encountered a love worthy of her generous heart ; may she be happy !

Hers was certainly a faithful heart, that would neither change nor forget ; and if these pages should ever see the light and come into her hands, even at a far distant date, I know that she would think of Violet still with tears, and of me with the same feeling as when she said : "I have confidence in you!"

Pray then for us, dear Luise, and be assured that we, your friend and I, will ever pray for you with tender gratitude !

I walked to the station by the path through the woods, sending my luggage by the omnibus, and said farewell to the beech-trees and pines which had seen me with Violet—how much had happened in those eight days !

It was sunset, and beyond the station the sun lit up the deserted woods ; I thought that I should never again see Eichstätt, and it was then that I gathered in remembrance some leaves of the perfumed "Waldmeister."

CHAPTER XXVIII

My brother and his family must certainly have suspected something, because they did not express the slightest surprise at my unexpected return, or at the intention I announced of soon resuming my interrupted travels ; they received my words in silence, and never afterwards alluded to them.

I would willingly have confided my secret to my brother, but did not feel sure that he could keep it from my sister-in-law, who, in her turn, would certainly speak of it to others.

It is now of you, *amica mia*, that I must ask pardon, for, meeting you about this time, you asked me whether the reports current were true, and I, with a certain hypocrisy, replied that society's rumours were never to be heeded ; you were not perhaps deceived by this apparent denial, for you answered that I was as usual "a closed book"—all the same I was not sincere.

You can judge, however, whether in the uncertain state of things, and considering my reserved nature, it would have been easy for me to speak.

Forgive me, if you think I was to blame,

and remember, in extenuation of my fault, the complete sincerity of the confidence which I made you later by the little Lombardian church.

I had arrived home on the 21st of May, and on the 1st of June had not yet heard from Violet.

It occurred to me that she might have written to the "Poste Restante," and I hurried there to satisfy myself; there was nothing at the office for me, but, as I returned to the house, I met the postman of our "quartiere," who handed me a letter with a foreign stamp—it was from Violet!

The contents meant life or death to me, and I felt I had not the courage to face my sentence there, amid the coming and going of people.

You know that old street, without a name, which runs along the east side of S. Maria ad Muros, not far from the post? I made my way quickly thither.

People stopped me, reproaching me for not saluting my friends, and one, who will perhaps now remember his words, said to me: "Are you ill? you look so white!"

Alone, in the grass overgrown alley, between the ramparts and the solitary church, I opened the letter and read:—

"My God, I yield! and though I know I ought to feel sad, I feel so very happy!"

"You will not find me at Nuremberg. I leave soon, and from the 1st of July will be with the Steele family at Rüdesheim on the Rhine; perhaps later on I shall go to England. Oh, my friend, now I have only you!"

V. Y."

The lateral door of Santa Maria was open, and I entered. Now, whenever I am in the city I visit this church every day, and go into the third chapel on the left, which is large and dim, with two stained glass windows. It was there I went that day, and it would be a real grief to me if I had to change from the old bench on which I then knelt, between the balustrade and the confessional.

In such moments we are speechless; for the joy and gratitude in my soul there were no words; and if some subdued sounds escaped my breast, while my face was buried in my hands, they were almost dolorous—*gemitus inenarrabiles*.

What in truth could I say?

All that I felt was that God was near, near to me, and that my spirit was in ecstasy.

Here is a digression for you alone, *amica mia*.

I would wish that positive philosophy would study these mysteries and impartially test their worth.

If a comparison were made between the

emotion felt by a scientist who discovers some important truth, or by an artist across whose mind a conception of great beauty flashes, and that felt by one who conceives and resolves to make a heroic sacrifice for the public good, their resemblance would, I think, be easily found.

All generate an intense spiritual pleasure, all detach the human spirit from the actual world surrounding it, urging it into inebriating contact with something that before was not in them and might still, they feel, depart from them, which must therefore also exist distinctly in itself although one cannot well understand how.

These diverse sensations, we can imagine, are caused by even so many diverse actions of one, sole, perfect Being.

But, you may say, if such a Being exists, all imaginable contact with Him ought to give emotions of equal nature?

Well, the religious soul seeks union with a Being perfect in truth, goodness and beauty, aspiring after it in *all* its attributes, and hence it follows that the emotion it experiences, though similar in nature, is more intense than all others, in which the contact is less.

If we imagine men living in dark underground cells and the fulminatory effect produced on them by a solar ray conveyed to them by means of a prism—one colour in this cell, another in the next—we would see them

touched by nameless emotions, unconscious that all have the same origin : the sun, from which all colour comes, and which renders still happier those of us for whom it shines in all its splendour.

Cara mia, you know that I have always had a weakness for the niceties of metaphysics ; I fear, indeed, to have concocted too many last winter, in your salon !

This is, however, the last ; be consoled !

I went home and spoke to my brother, who heard me with disapproval. I have no wish here to complain of him, for he was a just, good-hearted man and was always affectionate to me, who now strive to fill his place by his children, robbed of both parents in sixteen months.

He did not then, however, reflect sufficiently on the moral obligation which already bound me to Signorina Yves, and sought with too much fervour to turn me from my project ; I lost my temper, and in my anger dropped some words regarding the motive of his opposition which justly offended him.

Though I immediately excused myself, the impression produced remained. My brother assumed a cold reserve and I put an end to the conversation by asking him not to repeat my communication to anyone else.

Afterwards, certain questions from my sister-in-law about English and German Protestants,

and the lugubrious visage with which she asked them, gave me reason to suspect that he had spoken to her on the subject, for I had not told him that Violet was a Catholic.

This annoyed me and I was further wounded by a subsequent discourse from my sister-in-law in which she asked me if I could spare one of the four rooms I occupied, for a governess she was about to engage, and intimated that the house barely sufficed for their requirements.

Two families could easily have lived in the house, which was immense, and, though I had not thought of remaining there when I married, I was much irritated by this ill-concealed hostility, and, for the first time, thought of abandoning my native city altogether, and of taking Violet to Rome or Naples.

I shall not here repeat the answer which I wrote Violet.

It seemed to me then that the words flamed with the fire burning in my soul, and thus she felt them.

Reading them again afterwards, however, they appeared, and still appear, so very inadequate compared with what I felt at that moment!

No, I shall not transcribe them. They were but withered leaves of the AGAVE: let them fall!

CHAPTER XXIX

I PUT my affairs in order for some time, gave up the official positions which would most have suffered by my absence and retained those of minor importance, not to give rise to too much gossip.

Then I left for Milan and took the St Gothard line, arriving at Mayence on the evening of the 24th of June, with the intention of leaving next morning by steamer for Rüdesheim; I had taken it into my head that Violet must come this way, and had made a somewhat tedious detour in order to traverse, at least in part, the same route.

As the train crossed over the Rhine, a great agitation seized me.

Many years before, when I was very young, with my head still full of Heine's verses, the ballads of the *Wunderhorn* and of Teutonic figures from Criemhilt and Hagen down to the *Trompeter von Säkkingen*, I had seen the Rhine at the foot of the Rheinwald-horn.

For me its waters contained a treasure of fantastic poetry beyond that of the Nibelungen. Its very name intoxicated me and it had

always been my dream to see it in all its grandeur between Worms and Cologne.

Something was being fêted that evening at Mayence and the famous river was covered with boats which gave out fitful flashes of illumination; steamers with music and fireworks on board moved slowly to and fro; while the silvery gleam of an electric search-light, thrown from a distance, oscillated over the houses of the city, and the quays crowded with people.

I had not expected to find the Rhine already so majestic at Mayence, and my first impression was of awe; then I soon forgot the spectacle, and thought only that this great current would next day carry me on, beyond the lights and the boats, into the mystery of the distant shadow, to the unknown Rüdesheim, to Violet.

Later that night, as I walked along by the Rhine, the inky blackness of the sky, the silence of the crowd standing motionless on both sides of the river, the intermittent brightness, and the cries from a neighbouring menagerie, which mingled with the triumphal music, produced a more gloomy than festive effect.

Sinister thoughts came to me and I left the river, wandering at hazard through the deserted, narrow streets, until I found myself unexpectedly before the colossal Cathedral,

around which silence reigned. I stopped to contemplate the indistinct immensity of the dome and towers in the darkness, and here my heart recovered its profound joy, and I returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXX

(From my Journal)

MAYENCE, HOTEL KARPFEN,
24th June.

“*CARA MIA*,—You will wish to know what I felt this evening here in Mayence.

“This: that I stood on the threshold of eternity!

“The first time I heard your voice I had a similar impression, but, then, the gate leading to the infinite was closed—now it stands open, my Beloved, ‘I am thou,’ I hear your sweet voice, I feel that I am being renovated, that I am entering into a superior world.

“Cara, it may be a sin of pride, but it seems to me that no other love resembles ours, that we are truly united in God, and this thought so elevates and inebriates me !

“Oh that you could also feel thus !

“To-night, as I gazed above the lamps of the deserted ‘platz,’ at the dim summit of the

Cathedral, this faith flooded my soul, and I lifted my clasped hands to heaven.

"Beloved, it is you who are renovating me; I feel like a boy who is conscious of becoming adolescent, the fever of transformation is in my veins!"

"And you, who are working this regeneration, are youth, fulness of life, joy and power, and what you make of me I shall remain for all time, because the life now commencing for us both is everlasting."

"Do you know, do you realise that we are entering into eternity?"

"I clasp you close, close to me, so that you also may be renovated with me, so that all the sadness, scepticism and bitterness, and every trace of the first imperfect existence may disappear from your soul!"

"Can you imagine the time which will come then?"

"*Amore mio*, we cannot yet see perfectly. When we are truly one, we can no longer say to one another: 'You are life, power and joy,' but our eyes will open and we, seeking in our heart, thoughts, works and all things, the Love Divine, will say to Him, unceasingly to Him, 'Thou art our life, power and joy!'

"Where are you in this moment? Addio, I love you!"

(*Verses composed that evening in the train between Frankfort and Mayence*)

“On through the dreary night
Thunders the train.
O'er me a feeble light
Quivers amain.
While to one far removed
All my thoughts flee,
Knowing my best beloved
Thinks, too, of me.
On through the dreary night
Thunders the train.
Overhead planets bright
Make darkness wane.
Yet is my only thought
Ever for thee,
All things around are naught,
Naught else I see.
I hear a heart entreat.
What says its throbbing sweet?
‘Come thou to me !
I am thine, only thine,
Come thou, my love divine,
Come thou to me !’”

CHAPTER XXXI

THE next morning at half-past seven I left Mayence on the steamer *Loreley*.

It was raining and blowing hard, and the banks and islands of the river, with their tall poplars, were enveloped in fog ; the heights of Taunus were completely hidden, and, at one point, one saw little more than the yellowish surge on either side of the boat.

Finally, at the foot of sombre hills, behind an isle planted with great trees, Rüdesheim appeared.

I knew Violet was not yet there. Nevertheless the simple expectation of her coming, the presentiment of blissful hours, and the uncertainty of where, when and how I would speak to her, set my heart beating immediately I put foot on land ; I regarded eagerly the houses, rivers and hills of this town which later became to me so familiar and dear beyond all others.

I went to the Hotel Krass, where they gave me a little room by the *Salle-à-manger*, with its one window looking out on the garden-bower of the hotel, a little square of shade, green and roses ; beyond this one could see

the railway, the great greenish river and the summits of the Rochusberg—all was new to me, yet nothing appeared strange.

When later I questioned the waiter, a talkative hunchback, as to whether he knew of a family named Steele living in Rüdesheim, he opened his eyes wide with astonishment, and replied that Herr Paul Steele and his wife were among the most distinguished persons in the town. They possessed immense vineyards beneath the Niederwald and on the Rochusberg, also a large "Schloss" at Mayence; they travelled a great deal, and he thought that they were not in Rüdesheim at present, but promised to ascertain for certain.

He came afterwards, to inform me that they were in Frankfort, and had that very morning telegraphed for some things to be sent to Mayence, where they intended going for some days.

I did not lose a moment in writing to let Violet know where I was, and, in the uncertainty, wrote two letters, directing one to Nuremberg and the other to Mayence.

Then I enquired my way to the Steeles' residence, which I found to be an elegant villa in the old German style at the eastern extremity of the town, near where the road from Geisenheim crosses the railway.

On the evening of the second day after my

arrival, I received the following note from Mayence :—

“ We were to have remained here a week, but I have arranged that we leave to-morrow.

“ I cannot, oh ! I cannot rest any longer away from you ! My soul is more than ever yours, all yours, but, when far from you, the old arguments combat me again ; I will not now listen to them, nevertheless I suffer, suffer, and have infinite need of you ! ”

“ The Steeles wish to travel by night, so we are going by the train on the left bank which arrives at Bingen before daybreak.

“ If you hear the train, put a light in your window ; I think I could easily distinguish it even across the Rhine, and the sight of it would make me so happy ! ”

“ I do not know at what hour we shall reach Rüdesheim, as my friends have much to do in Bingen ; do not, however, come there or try to see me on disembarking ; come to the Steeles' villa at five o'clock, where you will then surely find us.

“ Addio, addio, I love you ! ”

“ V. Y.”

CHAPTER XXXII

I

“ Dispelling the silence of night
 Came the whistle and roar of the train.
I gazed from my balcony’s height,
 Expectant, nor waited in vain.

2

“ For it carried you past, my love !
 You were there in the rushing train,
And seemed like a star from above,
 To bring light to my window pane.

3

“ Then I strained you close to my breast,
 In fancy’s fierce passionate dream.
You came to my bosom to rest,
 In a fantasy wildly supreme.

4

“ Now passes the train, and alone,
 Alone in the darkness of night,
I stand, as if turned to stone,
 And gaze from my balcony’s height.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

I MADE no effort to see Violet on her arrival, for, from the moment when she had written—"I yield"—my sweetest pleasure was to obey a desire of my love's which was contrary to my egoism or personal wishes, striving thus to love and treat a similar gift from God in the least unworthy manner possible.

All that I permitted myself was to go about six in the morning to the landing-place for the steamers plying continuously between Bingen and Rüdesheim, feeling certain from Violet's letter that she would not arrive so early.

Here I remained about an hour in quiet, joyful anticipation of the future moment when my beloved would arrive and I should not be there.

After some time, however, as I listened to the murmur of the swift flowing river, which foamed and sparkled around the tense chains of the steamers, the thought rose involuntarily to my mind that perhaps my approaching time of happiness would pass even as quickly—the mere idea was intolerable, and I drove it from me with horror.

I spent most of that day in the Niederwald

woods, speaking to the plants and the shadows, searching for, and finding with great emotion, the white "Waldmeister," and declaiming aloud, like one demented, in the green solitudes, the verses it had inspired me with in the Eichstätt Bahnhofswald :—

"It brings sweet recollections of the Rhine,
With flowery banks, where towers and vineyards stand."

It was exactly five when I arrived at the Steeles', where I was ushered into a salon on the ground floor, with gothic windows, through the little octagonal coloured panes of which only a dim light entered.

Coming in from the sunlight I could not for a moment distinguish anything ; then Violet's voice said, "*Buona sera !*" and I saw her coming towards me with extended hand, while with the other she at the same time indicated another approaching figure, saying, "Frau Steele."

I heard suppressed joy vibrating in her voice, but she was quite mistress of herself and had her usual gracious composure. Frau Steele welcomed me very cordially, and, after pressing my hand warmly, introduced me to some other masculine and feminine forms, pronouncing my name with an assurance which pleased me as though something of Violet's love lay in it, for it showed that she must often have named me to her.

She then conducted, or more correctly, let the conversation drop, in such a manner that the visitors left gradually one by one ; as the last left my heart began to beat as though it were bursting.

"If you will excuse me," the hostess then said, "I shall go and inform my husband of your arrival."

Alone with Violet I approached her rapidly, and she, rising to her feet, embraced me and leant her head against my breast ; neither spoke ; we both lost consciousness of the actual world and even of our separate existences.

Violet was the first to lift her face, her eyes clouded by intense happiness, and to say in a low tone : "You really love me?"

I took her dear face in my hands, and drawing it to me, without replying, placed my lips on hers.

My eyes grew dim ; it seemed to me that I aspir'd all the air, all the light, and all the life of the world !

At this moment we heard the Steeles' voices, and had barely time to separate before they entered.

Yet palpitating from the tempestuous joy of the past moment, my senses were all too full of Violet to allow of my being able to utter a word, or at first take in what was being said ; her friends, however, appeared fortunately

to understand this, and spoke on continuously themselves.

Then, little by little, I gathered that they looked upon me as an old friend, that they already knew much about me and my family, and had heard first of me from a lady in Kreuznach with whom I had once had a literary correspondence.

While Frau Steele related this, Violet retired.

"A month ago," then said Herr Steele, who appeared about forty, "I certainly did not imagine that I should so soon have an engaged daughter."

The subject was thus introduced; the Steeles spoke of Violet in the warmest, most eulogistic terms; and then, after explaining that her father had been a very dear friend of the Steele family, they told me that Violet had commissioned them to inform me of what had taken place after her return to Nuremberg from Eichstätt.

Violet, however, reappeared before the narrative had even been begun, and Herr Steele laughed much over her haste.

His wife proposed going out into the garden which she would like to take a look at after their long absence. I soon found myself alone with Violet, who sank down on a rustic seat, pallid, and with an expression of dread in her eyes, which drew from me an exclamation of alarm.

"No, no," she said, "it is only that I am too happy."

I sat down beside her, and we regarded one another in silence for some time; my face must have expressed some secret terror, because Violet took my hand in hers, and her fixed gaze relaxed suddenly into a very sweet smile.

"I fear to lose you," she murmured, pressing my hand with a force I had not believed her capable of, and the previous frightened expression came back to her face for a moment.

"Violet," I whispered, "my love, my bride!"

Her eyes softened, and her melodious voice said, with subdued passion, "For ever?"

"For ever and ever," I replied, and writing here my heart re-echoes the words.

We spoke no further; it was so sweet to enjoy our happiness in silence, amid the fresh perfume of verdure and the sparkling of clear waters.

Only when we saw the Steeles returning did Violet say, "Come to-morrow at eleven, you will find me here; I hope then"—she added low and timidly—"to receive from you——"

She left the sentence uncompleted, and in another moment our hosts joined us.

I soon took leave; Herr Steele accompanied me and then related what had taken place in Nuremberg.

Violet, on her return, had been received with marked coldness by her uncles, who had already had a note from Professor Topler, stating that he freed their niece from her engagement to him, as he recognised his inability to render her happy; the von Dobras had then been subjected to an immediate examination by the Yves, which had come to a somewhat stormy conclusion, as Luise had heatedly defended her friend and advocated my cause.

No one knew what steps the uncles then took to make enquiries, but, after some days' silence, they summoned Violet to them, and in a solemn manner expressed their disapproval of her conduct, whereupon she had vainly striven to convince them that she had not been to blame, and had in no way broken faith with Professor Topler, since from the beginning she had clearly told him that she did not love him.

The uncles then stated that they had already suffered too much through the unhappy, ill-advised marriage their brother had made with a foreigner and a Catholic, to ever again consent to a member of their family making such another union.

Violet replied that she had not at all decided on marrying as yet; on which her uncles requested her to formally promise never to marry her Italian lover.

This she declined doing ; they had insisted, gave her a week to decide, and added that unless she promised, she could not continue to live under their roof.

Providence had ordained that the Steeles, returning from a trip in Saxony, should, just at this time, arrive in Nuremberg, where they found Violet in cruel distress ; feeling, on the one hand, all that she owed in gratitude to her relatives, and, on the other, the impossibility of submitting to such pressure.

After the Steeles had fruitlessly intervened in the matter, Violet came to a decision and accepted their hospitality for a time, with the intention of afterwards going to England to some relatives, as she did not know what my ideas as to the date of the marriage would be.

Herr Steele now hoped, however, that she would remain with them in Rüdesheim till the wedding ; I assured him that I intended to have this take place as soon as possible, adding that I would speak to Violet about it on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXXIV

(From my Journal)

I

“ Like him who from dark cavern vast
Gropes forth his way, until at last
He sees the light.

2

“ So have I gained thy being whole,
Thy hand, thy lip, thy very soul
Are my delight.

3

“ Then joys of sky, and heaven and air,
Of all the universe so fair,
All, all are mine.

4

“ All other things are reckoned naught,
My throbbing breast holds but the thought
Of thee and thine.”

CHAPTER XXXV

THE next day, at eleven, I found Violet in the garden. On pressing her hand I felt it icy cold, but her face was radiant ; she had been expecting me for an hour, although she knew she had told me eleven.

I gave her the preceding stanzas, and a note with five verses which no other mortal eyes have seen, or ever will see ; hers sparkled with joy as I spoke of this poetry written during the night.

“ See ! ” she exclaimed, “ my unexpressed wish yesterday.”

When, however, she read the verses, and felt the indescribable love they breathed forth, she regarded me with the same troubled passion and pressed my hand with the same convulsive energy as on the previous day, unable for some time to articulate a word.

“ I fear,” she whispered, finally, with her eyes cast down and caressing my hand, “ lest God should punish us because, at the Belvedere, you commenced to love me believing me married, and I let you think this ; I have so besought Him to pardon us—pray, too, dear one ! I could not give you up so soon, it

does not suffice me that you will be mine for ever in the next life, I feel so attached to the earth now! I wish to have you here, also here! Oh, you cannot realise how much I love you!"

Can you, *amica mia*, explain how the heart can, in the same instant, feel such anguish and rapture as confounded themselves in mine at Violet's passionate words?

I reproached myself inwardly for having agitated her too much and for not having put a greater restraint upon my feelings; I implored her to compose herself, saying that too strong emotion might injure her health.

"Then calmness, calmness, calmness!" she said seriously. "You must also become glacial!"

I took her left hand in mine.

"That cannot press yours as much as I would wish," Violet said somewhat sadly, "but you must like it as well as the other."

The little hand with its hidden injury was so dainty, delicate and transparent!

"It is the most beautiful hand in the world," I said.

"You must not say such things," Violet responded with a blush.

I smiled and replied that I would never do so again, whereupon she exclaimed impetuously: "Yes, yes! do say them!"

From her infirmity my thoughts wandered

naturally to another idea; I spoke of our marriage.

"And your relatives?" Violet questioned.
"What do they say? I ask because it seems to me that I ought to write to your brother."

Here my conscience accuses me of a fault with which the world, deceived by the noble sentiments strewn by me so easily through my books, would probably not credit me.

I had not forgiven my brother for the objections he had first raised or for his subsequent silence, and felt an unjust resentment towards him. Besides, my pride and egoism caused me to always consider myself as a victim of human injustice, who had to endure antipathy, envy and neglect from others; and I almost took pleasure in such reflections, which, in a way, made me dearer to myself.

Therefore I figured to myself that my brother and his wife were much more opposed to my marriage, and more bitter and unjust towards Violet and myself, than I had reason to believe, and the thought of Violet's writing an affectionate letter to my brother caused me a sudden repugnance which I could not overcome and which prevented my being even sincere.

I replied that I had not yet said anything to my relatives; that for the present it was not necessary to write; in any case it would be

for me to make our engagement known to them, and then for my brother to write first to my fiancée.

Violet listened with a surprised and mortified expression, and only then did I realise that this concealment of our engagement could be interpreted in a manner hurtful to her, at which reflection I was more grieved than at having suppressed the truth.

"I would not wish to separate you from your family," she said, without looking at me.

I begged her not to let her mind be disturbed by such an idea, saying that, in any case, I could not continue to live with my brother after I married, and that I had thought of going to live in Rome or some other large city where there would be greater facility for study and also a better climate than in my native town.

Violet, I saw, was not convinced by my arguments, and suspected that she herself was the cause of my making a similar determination.

"We will speak of it again," she said, with her wonderfully sweet smile; "later on we will talk seriously over many grave questions, won't we? Because, you know, we must be very, very wise!"

Then we discussed our marriage.

Violet's first idea had been for it to take

place in England, where a cousin, who had always been very kind to her, lived.

This relative, however, had given little encouragement to the suggestion. She was in bad health, and the idea of the commotion of a wedding in the house evidently alarmed her; Violet did not feel sufficiently intimate with the relatives she had in Rome to apply to them, and we therefore decided to accept the Steeles' friendly offer to have the marriage in Rüdesheim at the earliest date possible.

Suspecting that the complicated regulations of the Prussian legislature with regard to foreign marriages would lead to much procrastination, it occurred to me to suggest that we might only have the religious ceremony in Rüdesheim and the civil one later on in Italy.

Violet was indifferent on this point, but I saw that the proposal was distasteful to the Steeles. I therefore abandoned it, and it was decided that I should immediately enquire into the legal conditions and set about fulfilling them.

Returning to the Hotel Krass that day, my want of sincerity towards Violet about my relations weighed on my heart. At the hotel I found an ill-timed letter from my brother, that I only mention here in order to explain how it was that it was only after my return to Italy that he heard for certain what had happened in Rüdesheim.

Though my brother wrote, it was evidently my sister-in-law who had dictated the contents—every line, indeed, betrayed a certain contest between hand and thought ; I ought not and would not wish to harbour rancour towards the memory of this poor woman. The letter was, however, very ill-advised.

My brother gave me to understand that as after my marriage we could no longer live together, he would wish to be informed of my intentions with regard to the paternal house, which was common property between us ; he expressed his willingness to purchase my share from me, and finished by offering, in case it was not my intention to establish myself elsewhere, to procure another dwelling for me and arrange it in accordance with my wishes ; for Violet, or about her, there was no single word.

I at once replied with a few stiff lines expressing my resolve to remove to another city, and stating that I would instruct a lawyer to treat with him about the matter he spoke of. My brother did not write again.

When I think of the twenty-five days which followed that one I am dazzled by their splendour and lose all notion of time ; I recollect many moments with an acute clearness, but do not know how to unite them together, or which came first and which afterwards.

All pass contemporaneous and eternal through my mind, as though these memories of mine, symbolical of the perfect happiness to come, belonged already to Immortality and had taken the form of a perpetual present.

At first I did not intend to speak of this period of bliss; the intense sweetness of so doing, however, tempts me and I yield, since you alone, *cara amica mia*, will hear me. I shall therefore relate all without method, just as it comes from my heart.

CHAPTER XXXVI

IT was one evening at sunset ; Frau Steele had gone to pay a visit at the Villa Montrepos and Violet and I were awaiting her in Geisenheim.

I remember the century-old linden under which we sat, the village church with its mediæval towers, the flower-embowered cottages around us, the murmur of water and chirping of birds, the scent of jessamine in bloom, the golden glow and the sweetness of the hour.

On the way there we had spoken on indifferent topics, but, immediately our companion left, Violet had whispered, "Do you love me?" to which my eyes, not my lips, had replied, and we had not spoken again, unless it were by our silence itself, which was replete with passion.

"How sweet it is here!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"Would you like to remain here?" I responded, "would you like us to live here?"

"Oh, no!" she said, in such a decided tone that I looked at her in surprise ; she also regarded me and, though she was smiling, I

could see that there was something very earnest in her heart.

"Where does the agave bloom?" she then whispered, flushing slightly.

We were speaking Italian, so I don't know what prompted me to reply in English, as though fearing to be overheard, "I kiss you!"

We were silent for a while, then Violet begged me to repeat the verses on the blooming of the agave's flower:—

"Behold, uprises proud the agave flower,
In glorious heaven my sun reflects its power."

I recited them, adding, when I had finished, that now I no longer wished for fame and that my one thought was to be happy with her, for her and through her alone, for preference in some retired spot like Geisenheim, where we would conceal our existence from the world.

Violet listened with a look of secret perturbation, and gave a gesture of dissent, murmuring, "No, *caro*, no!"

Then seeing that I was regarding her as though expecting to hear her reasons, she said that there was something she wished to say to me, but that when we were together, she always felt incapable of giving her mind to anything serious; perhaps she could write it to me.

She had scarcely said this when she smiled, and seeing by my face that I had divined her

thought, added hastily that this time it did not treat of anything grievous as when, at the Belvedere, she had announced her first letter to me with the same phrase.

I begged her to write soon, and she promised to do so that very evening.

Wondering what the letter would contain I must, involuntarily, have assumed a serious air, for it was she now who whispered, "I kiss you!" adding with a delicious accent of anxiety, "You must not look so grave!"

We saw Frau Steele coming towards us, and, as if to hide our agitation from our friend, Violet called a little girl, who was just passing with flowers, to ask her what she had.

"'Waldmeister,' from the Niederwald," the child said.

"And what is your name?" questioned Violet further.

"Luise!"

"Oh!" we both exclaimed together, "Luise!"

The "Waldmeister" reminded us of the Eichstätt wood, and the name of our friend, the dear "Blondine," stung both our hearts with remorse and sadness, for we had not yet spoken of her, and this seemed to us a mutual fault.

Violet drew this other little Luise to her and kissed her tenderly.

CHAPTER XXXVII

(*This was Violet's Letter*)

"4th July.

" You were scarcely gone when I said 'good-night' to the Steeles and came up to my room.

" Fond as I am of these true friends, when you leave me I suffer at having to remain with them; for I long for solitude, so as to be with you again and press you to my heart, '*nel più profondo mistero*,' as your dear poem says.

" It is not, however, to tell you how I love you that I write, though I could fill many volumes with this; it is to fulfil at once the promise I made you in Geisenheim.

" Caro, I believe that I loved you very quickly at the Belvedere, much sooner than you imagine.

" Then, involuntarily, it seemed to me that it would be happiness to live near you, even as the most humble person in your household, helping, unknown to you, in your home-life, hearing you speak with others worthier than I, and reading—yes, I contemplated this audacity—reading your verses in secret.

"Afterwards, in the first ecstasy of knowing that you loved me, my mind was dazzled, and I wished that you should write for me alone. Once, later, this desire came back again. I was travelling from Florence to Rome, and heard some people speak of your idealism in such a hurtful manner that I could have wept with anger, and thought that, if you were mine, you should never give another single verse to the world.

"The second time, however, the thought soon passed, for then, through your letters, I understood you so much better than before, and knew that in what regarded your opinions or art, you were capable of pursuing your way with an absolute scorn for the attacks which reach you, as well as for those which do not.

"Now I am yours, and this is what is in my heart.

"We must live in your native country, where all your dearest memories are, and where one day in childhood, with awe-stricken amazement, you for the first time heard the voices of nature speaking, and subsequently learned from them that you were poet, and must reply.

"You remember having related this to me?

"We must live there, where you gained the knowledge of life and human hearts, which, in part, is already in your books, and in part still

in your mind ; there, where your soul has often vibrated with the sentiment of an entire people, because it seems to me that all these things are a poet's necessary aliment, and before all else you must be a poet with your entire soul and with all mine.

" Beloved, I am perhaps at once too sceptical and too enthusiastic, for which latter defect you are responsible, as you have given me back the heart I had when eighteen years old.

" Thus, though I believe that as poet you can really only aid a very few souls, I at the same time feel that the value of this limited benefit is inestimable, and that it would be culpable of you not to give it.

" That is not all. Though only a very ignorant little person of no importance whatsoever, I am, all the same, very presumptuous, and now dare to suggest what I would like your future work as artist to be.

" I am immensely pleased with the romance which you are writing, and feel how you will work at it when you are mine. I see myself already sitting beside you, with some much humbler work than yours in my hands, watching you and caressing you in desire while you write, but lowering my eyes when you raise yours from the paper, so as not to tempt you or disturb your tranquillity.

" I would wish, however, that your future books should treat not alone of an elegant

company of ladies and gentlemen—‘die vornehme Welt,’ as they say here—still less entirely of peasants and labourers. No; I would wish you to have a mixture of all sorts of people, as in real life they intermingle, or come in contact, or at least live side by side.

“And I wish another far greater thing: that you should be for these people the poet of Truth and Justice.

“My God! how my heart throbs, feeling that you will be this!

“I embrace you and press myself to you in thought. I love you so much, and I am so happy that it hurts me.”

“5th July.

“It is dawn, and I write by the open window in order to have light.

“I was not able to sleep, but I am rested, and the pure morning air refreshes me and causes me tranquil joy.

“Chance and the circumstances of my somewhat rambling life brought me in contact with many people, and made known to me many of their actions which those among whom they lived were ignorant of.

“I heard society erroneously bestow both praise and blame, and was still very young when I began to suffer at these erring human judgments. Few things, indeed, in life have caused me such indignation and bitterness.

"In my youth I was very romantic and ambitious, and had dreams of fame like a youth.

"I thought to become a great writer and to deal out justice with my pen regardless of all human respect. Possibly with the fiery, haughty character I had then, I thought more of exposing hypocrisy than of vindicating misjudged virtue.

"My dreams and my wild ambitions soon faded away, and of my former ardent ideal only an inaccessible reflection is left; I have, however, always thought that the poet, instead of bringing on the scene characters which never existed, or which are created by piece-work, ought to reproduce entire in his works the persons he has known in the world, representing them according to truth and justice, in such a manner as to serve as reward or punishment.

"I know that we are told not to judge our brethren, that we do not possess perfect knowledge, and that the ultimate sentencing of the human heart does not lie with us.

"I feel, however, with my whole soul, that on earth the poet is called upon to exercise this divine right, using it, not as an outlet for passion, as I would have sometimes done, but solely for the purpose of doing good, and with the prudent caution that one pronouncing in church the word of God has, or ought to have,

when he opens our souls to show us the sin there.

"*Caro*, do I cause you to smile? I believe really that I do, and that you caress and kiss me much as you would your love, which I am, and a little as you would the baby that I seem to you in this moment, for I believe you capable, sarcastic Signore, of even such a monstrous thing as laughing at me! Soon, however, you will not be able to do this with impunity, because if I have already bitten one of your fingers softly, softly, through love, I shall know how to bite also for revenge, and that seriously!

"But, no, it is true that it is not for me to point out your path to you: my duty is simply to follow you, to follow you always, at your side when the way is easy, in your arms when it is difficult. Do you know that I hope that it will be very difficult?

"This is a long letter, and I have not yet come to what really caused me to write, which is something against which my heart rebels, but which my mind and conscience approve.

"I know that your proposition about Geisenheim was not serious; but do you know why I would not live there or in any solitude with you? because then I should fill your life too much! For me it would be paradise; but it must not be, I would not wish it.

"I wish to be a fresh flame in your life, for

good and art, and to feel myself in all that you think and do, even when this is apparently extraneous and superior to me.

"I wish also to be your vanity, I alone, who am a part, a lesser part of you! and though you force yourself not to care for the praise of the critics or the crowd, you will abandon yourself—see how proud I am!—to the sweetness of being praised by me, by me who do not yet know how to praise, and who envy on this account the Italian women!"

"I shall, however, try to learn, and when words fail me, my caresses shall speak for me!"

"I fear I shall not understand the classical elegances or the purely Italian beauties of your writings."

"But you will teach me, Caro; I have so many things yet to learn!"

"When I think how ignorant I am of things every school-girl should know, I hide my face."

"Does it please you that I hide my face?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

As we entered the garden one day after a walk
Violet said : " Tell me why you love me ? Is
it still because of your dream ? "

" Oh, no !" I answered smiling. Indeed, I
know now that because of the dreams—I beg
you to note *dreams*, Signorina !—I never loved
you at all."

" What !" exclaimed Violet with a surprised
but pleased expression. " Then you have
basely deceived me, ' gentile Signore,' and it
was pure romance you related to me at the
Belvedere, with such beautiful phrases about
my voice being life and hope ? Bravo ! and
when did you do me the honour to begin to
care for me ? "

" I never for a moment willingly deceived
you," I replied. " I think now, however, that
I was myself deceived, and that the great
agitation, caused by your voice, was simply an
exaltation of the mind. Do you know when I
think I really began to love you ? In the
meadow of San Nazaro, where you were so
cruel to me, and uttered that fine impertinence
about vulgar channels."

" Oh how late ! " she cried, clasping

her hands and smiling. "How slow you were!"

To me, remembering her pungent words and disdainful attitude on that day, it was a delicious pleasure to hear her now laugh so gaily and say "*tu*."

All at once she assumed a contrite air, lowered her eyes and sighed: "Poor me! I began much sooner?"

"At Rome?" I asked eagerly. "After having read '*Luisa*'?"

"Too soon!" said Violet, laughing again. "How presumptuous the Signore is!"

Then she confessed seriously that when at the Belvedere she was told of the presence of the author of "*Luisa*" in the hotel, she, who had always attributed the book to a woman, had felt an unwonted tremor in her heart. "I saw you," she continued, "before you spoke to me, and you had such a grave, severe air that all idea of love left me to my great relief. The second time, however, that you spoke to me I became troubled, and, when our hands touched on the telescope, I felt for an instant, through my entire being, that we might love one another. Afterwards what you said about the possibility of second love put all my ideas in confusion; nevertheless I resisted these feelings, and above all wished to conceal them from you. Some words of yours, which did not at all please me, aided me to dissemble, but,

my God ! I loved you already at San Nazaro,
and it cost me so much to be severe ! It is
easy to understand that I overdid it."

"And your departure," I said ; "how I then
suffered!"

"Do not speak of it," Violet replied, her
voice full of anguish ; "you must never speak
of all the pain I caused you!"

We walked in silence to the house, and as
we crossed the threshold Violet put her lips to
my ear and whispered slowly in a voice grave
with passion : "I wish to be loved with the
heart, you must know, not with the imagina-
tion!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

IT is now dear, bright Heidelberg that rises before my mind.

Our friends had proposed and arranged a three days' trip there, and we were going from the Hotel Victoria to the "Schloss," walking across the Wolfshöhle, through profound woods, intersected in every direction by winding paths, which ascended and lost themselves in the solitudes, while at the crossways mute hands pointed to invisible places ; around us peaceful shades, perfumed foliage, and all the musical magic of summer in the air.

"Fairyland !" Violet said to me, smiling.

"Yes," I replied, mechanically, "Fairyland," and as I said the word there passed through my heart a presentiment of a time to come, when this hour would only be a remembrance, a vision of a fairyland enjoyed for a moment and then lost for ever.

Violet, who was regarding me, asked : "Of what are you thinking ?"

"Of nothing," I answered.

She half-pouted and half-laughed at my reply, but a moment later said, *sotto voce*: "I know you thought of something sad ; I did too."

"What?" I asked.

"That I, your fairy, am but a poor one, weak, weary and wounded!"

She was suffering from enervation that day, so much so that I had proposed that she should renounce the walk ; she had, however, seemed unwilling to do this, and I had not insisted, fearing that the mortification of not being able to come might do her still more harm.

This thought, that she would have wished to be well and strong *for my sake*, only once passed her lips, but I saw it in her eyes every time she felt badly.

The Steeles had mounted to Molkencur, and we awaited them not far from the Kranzel, where the way turns, girding the hill half way up.

At our feet lay the enclosed valley of the Neckar, and before us, yet distant, beyond the range of hills, we saw the old Schloss appearing, an enormous ruined mass overgrown with verdure.

White clouds drifted across the sky, and a soft breeze blew in our faces ; the way was deserted, and we felt ourselves more alone than at Geisenheim.

Violet abandoned her hand to me, and I spoke of the first contact of our hands at the Belvedere, and of the joy I had felt in the instant.

"Now you no longer feel so?" Violet asked.
"I see that you are getting too accustomed to having my hand! You must become again like you were at the Belvedere," she added, drawing it from me.

She then began to jest with an indescribably charming coquetry; during this time she often had similar delicious moments in which she appeared quite another Violet, whose existence I had never suspected, and who made me almost wild with love and jealous terror lest she should ever show herself so to others.

I could scarcely refrain from clasping her in my arms, and she, seeing this, was alarmed, and became serious again, whispering to me that I did not know anything of her yet, not even her most loving words, and that I must wait until she was my wife.

A party of people came towards us, and she was silent until they had passed, then, smiling, she handed me her little note-book, for me to write some verses in it as a souvenir of Heidelberg.

She was, I thought, a little surprised and perhaps also mortified to learn that I could not write verses thus improvisedly, and I was somewhat troubled as though this might cause me to fall in her affection; at this she protested, without words, but with such a repressed yearning of her person towards me and such a light in her eyes!

"Even if," she said in a low tone, after a pause, "even if you were to lose all, all your poetic talent, I would always love you as I do now!"

Her voice was as agitated as though the misfortune she spoke of really befell me in that moment, and wishing for some reason to hide her face from me, she buried it in her book.

I touched the perfumed masses of her hair with my lips, but it gave me then no vertigo, for I felt that I had kissed, not my future bride, but rather a dear companion, joined to me by a sacred and solemn sentiment, superior to youth and beauty and all fugitive things.

I took the pocket-book and wrote in it:—

FAIRYLAND

I

"In a land of joyous song
Pass I through a woodland brake,
Musing while I walk along,
This a fairy's home must make.

2

"Mute or tuneful at her will,
Now appearing, now concealed,
Only to that forest still,
Is her beauty all revealed.

3

"Then I spy a winding way
Winding through that woodland chase,
Tortuous, twisting, does it stray
Near that fairy's resting place ?

4

"Should it lead my footsteps near,
I would stay her timorous flight,
And with kisses banish fear
From that lovely woodland sprite.

5

"Though the way concealed remain,
And the wood a mystery quite,
[I the loved one's lips may gain,
In the darkness finding light."

I had never in my life written verses so quickly, there were, therefore, so many corrections that Violet was unable to decipher them, and I had to read them to her myself ; I had counted much on the effect of the last verse, but soon found I had deluded myself, because from the first Violet had not the least doubt but that she was the fairy.

"How can that be?" I exclaimed, "when I say that I do not know where she hides herself?"

"Yes, yes," she replied tranquilly, "but I know well that you mean me!" and, when she had heard the last verse, she said simply, "You see I was right!"

Meanwhile the Steeles arrived, enthusiastic about Molkencur, and resolved to return there for the sunset with us.

Herr Steele and I walked up, the ladies drove, and we spent some delicious hours there, sitting at a table which commanded a splendid view of the fiery sunset and vaporous plains of the Palatinate, as well as of the Schloss and Neckar valley, and drinking in the pure air of the woods, to which our friend Steele added, for his part, some "schopes" of beer.

The plump little Frau Steele, who was full of intelligence and goodness, sustained against me the superiority of the German literature over the English; while her husband, younger, more vivacious and less cultured than she was, went to and fro, from his beer to all the different points of view, highly exasperated because he could not discover the cathedral of Spira on the horizon.

"One understands," Frau Steele said to me smiling, "that you admire all that is English! but be sincere if you can, and tell me whether, as artist, you do not prefer the women of our literature to those of the English, and are not Goethe's feminine creations more natural than Shakespeare's?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Violet, as though scarcely able to credit her ears.

"But yes!" repeated Frau Steele, "more natural! I think no poet has created women

so true to life as Goethe, and, because of this very truth, so graceful and lovable! Shakespeare's women all seem more or less to belong to dreamland: the bad ones are horrible monsters, and the good, excuse me, dear Violet! always seem to me a little insipid."

"Of course," I replied jestingly, "Desdemona, Miranda, Juliet and Jessica, are unfortunate *Wälsche*, who have not studied at Nymphenberg, or gone through a course of gymnastics; who have not the least idea of competitive examinations, and do not care for skating! Ophelia did not follow her brother to Gottinga, and now one believes she did not even subscribe to the "*Gartenlaube*!"

"You are perfidious, Signore!" Frau Steele exclaimed, and her husband, who, in despair of ever distinguishing Spira, returned at this moment to his beer, enquired what the discussion was about.

"Listen, and give me your assistance!" said his wife. "Our friend here admires the women of English literature, and I those of the German! what do you think?"

"It seems to me," answered Herr Steele, with mild philosophy, "that I prefer the women out of books!"

We laughed; his wife shrugged her shoulders.

"And you, Violet!" she said, "what do you say? For a moment strive to forget

your nationality and tell us what you really feel."

"I have my opinion," replied Violet, with a smile, "but I am not literary and cannot make fine speeches! all I can do is to write my name here!" and she drew towards her the visitors' book, the waiter had brought us a short time before.

Instead of her own name Violet wrote that of one of the women created by me, and opposite this, as her country, put another very sweet name, "Italia."

The Steeles had, in the morning, already written in the book, and only I read Violet's loving thought. Even if she had not signed to me to be silent, I would not have spoken of it, for I well felt that these two words were perhaps among the most tender and sacred which love could speak, and that they should remain between us two.

I was so happy that I left Frau Emma complete mistress of the field.

The moon was rising over the wooded heights of the Königsstuhl, as we descended on foot, Violet leaning on my arm; from the town a distant sound of bells came and went in the wind; the cuckoo sang in the woods, of which the moon just grazed the agitated summits.

The Steeles preceded us, laughing among themselves; I spoke with Violet of the emotion

it had caused me to read her new name, her new country.

She pressed my arm tightly without replying, and, since we were then passing in the shadow of a large chestnut tree, it was only natural that my fairy should remind me in the sweetest manner of the verses made for her.

"I the loved one's lips may gain,
In the darkness finding light."

CHAPTER XL

I TOLD Violet all my thoughts and all the good and bad impulses of my soul, with the same thirst for sincerity, as I would have experienced speaking to God, and the more difficult and humiliating it was to me to confess, with the more ardour did I do so.

When uncertain as to whether an act or thought were reprehensible, the judgment of the invisible Violet, who lived, and lives in my conscience, was, and is still, always sufficient to clear away all doubt—this infallible judgment being always much more severe than that which the living, visible Violet gave.

Thinking of this a singular analogy struck me from which arose these verses, composed one day on the steamer going to Mayence.

“One face I ever see, and that is thine,
Thy love is mine, my thought in thee I find,
Thou art my being in a sense divine,
My inner conscience and my secret mind.

“There rules thine eye to do the heavenly will,
Untouched by evil, and unmarred by shade ;
A mirror of the power divine that still
Hath all the beauty of the light displayed.

"But if reproved by thee for fault of mine,
Trembling I say my frailties are thine,
The self-same spirit doth us both entwine.

"So rapturous thy kiss, thy love so dear,
In thee reflected, as in magic sphere,
The goodness and the grace of God appear."

Violet had remained in Rüdesheim in expectation of a visit from a Nuremberg friend, and I had taken the opportunity to go to Mayence in order to buy her a present.

I returned with a very simple bracelet, and these verses, the conception of which she at once seized and was delighted with, although she required an explanation of some of the details.

She then observed that the poem was so unlike all the others I had given her, that it did not appear mine, and, when I—although I perfectly understood what she meant—asked her in what she found them different, she replied that they seemed more studied, and reminded her of the Italian classics, she would have thought them composed by a "quattro cento" artist.

"I have read the poem many times," she said to me next day, "and it makes a curious impression on me; the style appears to me less natural than that of your other verses, yet I am infinitely better pleased to find myself mirrored in these than in those."

I observed that this might be because of the idea. "No," she said, "I feel already that it is not only that, it is also because of the language which has such an old-world, spiritual ring—tell me which manner is best liked in Italy."

"Let us leave my poem alone," I replied, "in Italy they like better verses than mine. There are people, however, who say that one ought to express modern thoughts in the antique forms, but this is an error, because it is necessary that a new idea should produce also a new style and a new harmony."

Violet appeared sunk in thought for a few moments, then she coloured, and, drawing down my head with both her hands, whispered :

"I shall always, always love you as I do now, but, when my face becomes old and the voice you love is no longer so sweet, what will you do then?"

Her two hands pressed my temples with all their force.

"What are you thinking of?" I replied, "then I shall no longer be in a state to write verses, I shall only be able to repeat these to you each day!" and I went on to jest about our senile sentimentality, at which Violet took offence, half in joke, half in earnest; saying that I was an odious cynic who found ridicule in everything; this had pleased her much at first, she said, when she had thought it folly

for woman to love unworthy man, but now she no longer liked it.

"I also," she said, "was once sarcastic like you, but you see I am not so now," saying this she was obliged to laugh, because she felt that she often still had fine similes, and short phrases which pricked people like pins; she admitted this, but protested that she always strove against the inclination, and maintained that the feeling of being so happy, of loving and of being loved in return, rendered her indifferent to sarcasm.

"Therefore," she said, "this sarcastic sense cannot be good, and ought not to be consistent with the plenitude of happiness and love. You also will try to lose it, won't you?"

She laughed again at seeing my distressed, almost alarmed expression, and asked whether I would find it such a very difficult undertaking; on my replying in the affirmative she remarked that, as I was an artist, I might let it evaporate without malignity in my books.

"Nevertheless," I asked, "you think that it would be better to restrain it there, too?"

"Perhaps yes," she answered in a low tone, "perhaps the noblest books are not those which represent the ridiculous."

I maintained with warmth, too much warmth, that this was not exact, and sought to free myself from the accusation of malignity, saying

that when I myself was ridiculous it gave me an acute, exhilarating sensation.

"You are malicious also towards yourself," Violet responded, "and in me do you ever find the ridiculous?"

"I fear not, sad to relate!" I replied, with a mock sigh.

CHAPTER XLI

THE following verses were probably written some days after we returned from Heidelberg, because I remember composing them after midnight at the window of the hotel, while the ruddy crescent-formed moon rose above Ingelthum on the other side of the Rhine, casting an oblique golden ray into the obscurity of the river.

"Do you know," I said to Violet next morning in the presence of the Steeles, "last night the Nibelungen treasure was discovered."

I spoke with such an accent of sincerity that an "oh" escaped Frau Steele.

"I found it, and it is all for Signorina Yves," I added, giving her these verses :—

1

"Beneath the moonlight streaming,
Gold in the river dark,
A wondrous treasure gleaming,
In the cold wave I mark.

2

"While quivering poplar trees
Beside the rushing Rhine,
Bowed by a mighty breeze,
Their leafy tops incline.

3

"That shining treasure of gold
 Hid in the rushing Rhine,
 Will I in verses enfold,
 Taking it to be thine.

4

"Still shall the river despair,
 Robbed of the gleaming gold,
 Which in thy tresses so fair
 Evermore taketh hold."

We were going that morning by the steamer to Bingen and then on to the Mausethurm and all met by appointment at the landing-stage, where Violet, however, had gone an hour earlier to make a sketch of water and sky; while the Steeles examined her work, she read the verses and thanked me by a long regard.

"Violet has painted and you will describe our Rhine," Frau Steele said to me.

"He has already done so," murmured Violet.

"I?" I exclaimed, surprised.

"So it would appear," Frau Steele said with an interrogative smile.

"But it is the first time that I see the river," I replied.

"Then describe it now," said Herr Steele, "write down what you see and give us a poet's impression of the Rhine; thus we shall judge whether you or Signorina Yves paint best!"

The Steeles were like children who, when a ludicrous idea enters their heads, are captivated by it and become impervious to reason ; thus, notwithstanding my resistance, I was unable to elude this capricious proposal, and Violet, from whom I expected help, joined the others, and herself gave me paper and pencil.

On our left stood the black ruin of the Adlerthurm, on our right the green poplars of the islands against a background of azure hills ; the river descending from the east flowed directly towards us, clear as the sky as far as the eye could reach, its large expanse of uniformly rapid water only separated from the horizon in front of us by a line of houses and trees ; near us, along the right bank, a line of black barques swayed on the water, which effervesced and sparkled around the anchor chains, while the smoke from a steamer, the *Criemhilt*, ascending in balls, became silvery in the sun.

I believe that I indicated, more or less, thus what I saw. I have not the paper, which I threw immediately into the river.

"Well," said Steele, "I, who am not a poet, see a great quantity of water—much more than is necessary !—I look, not at the poplars, but at my vineyards on the Rochusberg, which present a very melancholy appearance ; before arriving at the Adlerthurm my gaze rests on the hump of your waiter at the Hotel Krass,

who stands angling close by—which said hump does not appear to me unworthy of a poet's observation! You must, however, allow me to give the palm to the Signorina, because you have not even said what colour the Rhine water is."

I replied that, in the presence of Germans, I would rather attempt to define even the colour of Hegel's metaphysics, to that of the Rhine.

Later, on board the steamer, Violet said to me that what I had described, she had also seen while painting, but that that was not poetry, was not the Rhine, and might apply to any other river.

It appeared to her that I had seen the Rhine more with a poet's eyes when, my imagination excited by the Rüdesheimer, without delineation I had painted it in one single line :—

“ It brings sweet recollections of the Rhine,
With flowery banks, where towers and vineyards stand.”

“ That is the true Rhine,” she said.

CHAPTER XLII

IT was on board the white and green *Criemhilt*, returning from a trip to St Goar, that Violet said to me: "What do your friends write to you? Do they know that you are committing this folly?"

We were in the midst of a crowd of people and Violet amused herself by saying all sorts of aggravating things, which made me long to kiss her, knowing well that I could not do so.

"You are silent!" she continued, with the malicious eyes of the Violet I had seen for a moment in the Heidelberg woods, "one can see that you have not told them because you are ashamed of me! Now you would like to embrace me to avoid having to reply, but have not even the courage to do this! I would be capable of disregarding all these people around us and it would make me so happy if you could despise all the world's conventionality for love of me— No, in mercy, no! I beg of you!" she said, lowering her voice, terrified at the movement I made as if to take her provocation in earnest.

Later on, however, she put the same question to me again, seriously, and I had to

confess that in Italy, except for my brother, no one knew anything of my engagement.

Violet was silent a little.

"Then," she said, "if I fell into the Rhine, no one in Italy would ever know that we knew one another, for you would never tell anyone, would you?"

I hesitated before replying.

"Oh, promise me," she said, "promise me not to say anything! It suffices me to know that I shall live in you, and I would not like to think that the history of our love would, unnecessarily, pass the lips of other people. Only speak of it in case something becomes known in Italy, and it is thought that I was your mistress, not your betrothed."

"Violet," I replied, "let us not needlessly sadden ourselves thus, but discuss instead the preparation of a list of all our relatives and friends in Italy, Germany and England, to whom we ought to send cards announcing our marriage."

"Yes," she said, "that is necessary and we must do it, but it is much more difficult for me now, knowing that neither you nor I have friends or relatives who will rejoice over our happiness."

She then returned to the previous subject, and when she again pressed me as to whether I would be silent in the event of losing her, I admitted that it would be a great consolation

to me to open my heart about her to someone who would hear me with sympathy—making then a vague allusion to you, *amica mia*.

"You have Emma Steele," she said in reply to this.

"Apropos of these poor Steeles," I exclaimed, to change the subject, "we leave them too much alone, it appears to me."

We rose from our places in the bow and joined them at the other end of the boat; Violet began to chat with Frau Emma, whose husband gave me a dissertation on the vineyards, which, poorly planted and completely shorn of grass, were of a yellowish, greyish colour that made a depressed contrast to the vigorous woods of the summits.

When we stopped at Oberwesel I thought to recognise a certain small individual who mounted on the steamer, carrying a stick and umbrella; so, detaching myself from the party, I went to shake the hand of my old friend Toplerus senior, after assuring myself that the Professor was not with him.

On seeing me, he caused a great uproar, like the good "Schwabe" that he was, and it was difficult to get him to understand that he must be quiet, as Signorina Yves was on board, and I did not wish her to see him for fear of its agitating her.

"Jealous, jealous, jealous," he said. "I was right: she was in love with me!"

He then related that he had gone to Oberwesel to see a friend of his, an artist, where he had further visited the "Katze" and the "Maus" (two ruins of castles), and that he was now on his way to see a lady in Kreuznach, so that he should leave the steamer at Bingen.

He asked how we came to be there, and seemed to have only a very imperfect knowledge of what had taken place in Nuremberg. I did not like to ask after his brother; he, however, told me that he was fairly contented, without explaining himself further.

Meanwhile the sky had become overcast and a sudden downpour of rain put the whole boat in confusion.

I hurried to Violet, but found that she had already descended to the cabin, and there was such a mass of people on the stairs that I had to renounce all idea of rejoining her, and took refuge under Topler's immense green umbrella.

He knew the Rhine by heart, but was as enthusiastic as a boy seeing it for the first time, and stood by the side of the boat, his long nose to the wind, smiling all over with admiration, in complete disregard of the rain, asking me whether I had been to this or that place, and suggesting suitable tours also for Violet.

Above all he made me promise to visit

the Drachenfels in the Siebengebirge with her.

I said I thought of taking her to Wetzlar in memory of Goethe, and was surprised to see his face quite cloud over.

"No, no!" he exclaimed brusquely. "Do not go to Wetzlar!"

"Why not?" I asked in astonishment. "What is there against it?"

"It is not worth while," he replied, and drew my attention to the standard on the castellated bulwarks of Rheinstein, which now appeared, behind the rain-clouds, on top of a precipitous rock among the woods on the left bank, opposite to Assmanshausen.

I could not explain my old friend's mysterious behaviour, except by the supposition that Topler junior was at Wetzlar, and, as I had not yet spoken to Violet of this trip, I now resolved immediately not to do so.

At Bingen Topler descended, and shortly afterwards the rain ceased, and as we crossed over to Rüdesheim sky and water broke into a sparkling smile.

Violet returned on deck and was in high spirits, jesting and laughing, but I could not feel gay; something weighed on my heart, I did not know what.

CHAPTER XLIII

Now I come to the beginning of the anguish, which I dread, yet long to relate.

It seems to me as if I had been in a train, which up to the present had leisurely traversed a spacious valley of smiling aspect varied by a gentle melancholy, and that here the mountains close suddenly and ominously around the locomotive, which accelerates precipitously its flight, furious with terror.

And in truth does not my existence, since the events I am about to relate here, resemble a passage through some great Alpine tunnel? Have I not come from the sun, the smiling plains and wooded valleys, into this vibrating darkness, where I am carried rapidly along without cessation, in anxious expectation of emerging, I know not where nor when, into the sunlight?

It is now of the waiting-room of the little Assmannshausen station that I think.

Three days after the trip to St Goar we mounted to the Niederwald together with the Steeles and some of their friends from Mayence.

It was Sunday, and we met many gay

parties coming out of the woods with bunches of flowers, the men wearing them in their hats and the women carrying them in their hands and on their breasts.

Close by the national monument, of which only the foundation was then standing, a group of people were singing something patriotic that had a religious sound.

A distant menace of storm was in the air, and I shall never forget the sombre impression produced by the blackness of the sky over France, the mighty river, disputed by both peoples, flowing at our feet, and the grave, solemn chant.

Violet had ascended on horseback, as the railway from Rüdesheim to the monument did not then exist, and it seemed to me that the ride had much fatigued her, although she would not admit this.

From the Jagdschloss we all descended the other side of the hill on foot to Assmannshausen, where we intended taking the train for Rüdesheim.

Violet, who was leaning on my arm, stopped often, and then leant her shoulder also against me, and this, though unutterably sweet, alarmed me somewhat, as it was unusual with her.

The descent being very steep, I asked her repeatedly whether she were tired; she, smiling a little sadly, replied that she was not.

The last time, however, she did not answer

my question, but said in a low tone of emotion : "I love you so much, you are my sun, you are everything in life to me, it would be too cruel if I did not live to become your wife!"

These words agitated and terrified me more than I can express, but at the moment I could not enquire further, as our companions, who, as became good Germans, had gathered a great quantity of flowers, now came towards us, with much laughter and friendly strife, to offer their spoils to Violet, and the latter, who had seen my distress, now sought by an assumed gaiety to mitigate the effect of her sad words.

After an eternity we arrived down at the bottom of the valley of grey vineyards where the melancholy little village of Assmannshausen lies by the narrow river, gloomy and ireful, and here, as it wanted nearly an hour to the arrival of the train, Violet and I entered the station while the others went to drink the celebrated wine of the country.

She then told me that during the night she had woken up suddenly in such agony that she thought life was leaving her, and, though the spasm had passed very quickly, the impression of having been in great danger remained with her, and the fear that another such attack might prove fatal.

I reassured her as well as I could, and caressed her, but when, after a time, she lifted

her head to regard me, she said with a smile : " Now you are paler than I !" and I could only utter a meaningless " No " in reply, my voice failed me.

After a short silence, Violet whispered to me that she had something else to tell me ; I could not guess what it was, but a dull dread filled my breast.

" Last evening," she began after a pause, with her head bowed and in a subdued voice, " I had a letter from—" and she named the person she had loved in the past.

On hearing this name, so pronounced, a painful chill seized me, and I let go her hand which previously I had been holding in mine.

She clasped mine quickly again, saying softly, " Do not act thus, do not act so that I must hate him ! "

I was grieved at myself and asked her pardon.

" You know," she said with pathetic gentleness, " that you are all the world to me and that I am a part of yourself."

Then taking courage she related that he had directed the letter to Nuremberg and seemed to know nothing of her present circumstances ; he was very unhappy, all his expectations had been disappointed and all his plans fruitless ; now, powerless and hopeless, he turned to her, imploring at least a pitying word, and, saying that remorse for having wronged her was one of his greatest

torments, he asked, indirectly, if she were yet free.

I listened in silence, connecting, in my mind, the attack in the previous night and her distressed appearance with this letter; suffering and forcing myself to conceal this, either through pride or because I felt that I had neither right nor reason to be grieved.

When she ceased I made no remark, not even asking where the letter had come from, my one desire was that she would not speak further of it; I preferred not to know where this man was, and as far as I could tried to banish his image from my existence.

Violet made a fresh effort and told me that she had believed it her duty, in charity, not to leave such a letter unanswered; and it seemed to my jealous fancy, that the manner in which she said this, expressed a resolve that she would have maintained, although unwillingly, even against my opposition.

I imagined that, notwithstanding her love for me, she, womanlike, took pleasure in being still loved by the other, and this suspicion irritated me. Fortunately, however, before I had time to make any captious remark, Violet handed me the reply she had written.

First came words of cold and measured compassion and wise counsel; it finished thus:—

"My heart belongs henceforth completely and eternally to a man who loves me, as I love him, with the most intense love.

"Never can I sufficiently thank God who has brought our lives together; already, in a measure, Paradise has begun for me on earth, and whatever befalls, I can never again be wholly unhappy; if it is owing to the influence you had on my life that my heart was free when, in a far-off land, I learned to know my fiancé, you need certainly feel no remorse.

"Courage! and remember that you were once loved by me, if this can help to keep you on the straight way."

These last words spoiled for me the very sweet impression of the preceding, and I begged Violet to remove them.

She consented, smiling with indulgent tenderness, as one who yields through affection, not conviction, so that I regretted my demand and was ashamed of it; afterwards, when we arrived in Rüdesheim, I asked Violet to send the letter as it was and she gave it to me to post.

Then I saw that it was directed to Wetzlar, and understood Dr Topler's counsel.

CHAPTER XLIV

FROM this moment a sharp and devouring impatience entered into my passion.

I was not, I think, jealous, but a fire burned within me which produced almost the same effect.

I made every effort to hasten on the marriage, and again tried, but without success, to get the Steeles to agree to the plan of having only the religious ceremony in Rüdesheim; Violet would readily have consented to this, but she was unwilling to go against the wishes of her hosts, who regarded her as a daughter.

Thus it was arranged that the religious and civil marriage should both take place on the 25th August, which was the earliest date at which all the required conditions could be fulfilled.

Our one fixed idea afterwards was that in the middle of October we would go to Rome for the winter, with the idea of establishing ourselves definitely there if, after some months' trial, it pleased us.

From the marriage till October all was uncertain. Violet spoke once of the Black Forest, suggesting a solitary villa amid the

waving meadows by the blue Danube, between Willingen and Donaueschingen ; but when I suggested Venice she immediately agreed, not only to please me, she said, but also through coquetry, because in Venice, thanks to the gondola, I would observe her imperfection less.

She then added that she was glad she should be my wife before going to Venice, otherwise she would have been afraid to go there, the place had made such a peculiar impression on her ; further she would not explain herself, pretending that she had already said too much, and leaning her face against me she murmured that I would understand later when we were in Venice.

Many times after her death, remembering the feelings which these words, and the warm pressure at my shoulder, aroused in me, I have thought that, in separating us so quickly, God wished to save me from the blindness of too strong a passion, which would have devoured me entirely, and would have left no place in my heart for any other human creature, or perhaps even for God Himself.

But who can tell whether it would really have been so, and whether after the first transports of passion were over, my beloved would not have known how to lead me, without my noticing it, to a less fevered form of sentiment ? I, who lost the light of my eyes because of a touch, was nevertheless the same

who had kissed her warm, scented hair at Heidelberg with an affection almost religious, and full of peace.

Miserable beings that we are, different at every moment of our existence, and more miserable human pride, which revolts at such an accusation!

The hours of evening bend us to the earth, and those of morning raise us to the heavens: even for one single day we can neither love nor desire in the same manner, no matter what our haughty mouths may say.

Sometimes, it is true, we are ourselves innocent of the cause of these obscurities of the intellect; more often, however, it can be found in a shade of evil voluntarily received —though perhaps only for an instant—by our mind.

I had always loved Violet with my whole being, but if, during this period, the more elevated sentiments of my nature were all but silent, and I was dominated by a fever which deprived me of sleep and repose, I feel that it was because of the movement of unjust jealousy to which I had yielded.

It is true that I had said to Violet, "Forgive me," and that the human pardon purifies, but on this point she had been too lenient and would not even admit that there was anything to excuse.

Speaking with the Steeles about our honey-

moon, she said that she was sorry to leave Germany without having seen Cologne, on which Steele at once proposed an excursion there.

This suggestion was distasteful to me, for I was indifferent to all and everything except Violet, and I regretted missing even for a few days such delicious hours as I passed alone with her in Rüdesheim.

Violet, however, appeared pleased at the idea, and I gladly sacrificed my most exquisite joy for her.

CHAPTER XLV

ONE of my last pleasant recollections is that of a surprisingly handsome brunette who mounted on to our steamer at Bonn. I no longer remember her face, but it was certainly impossible not to admire her seductive grace and mobile eyes, speaking and voluptuous.

As the few passengers, including the Steeles, were in the cabin, and Violet and I were alone on deck, the beauty began to regard me as a suitable prey for her amusement during the voyage, all the more expressly, I think, because she saw that I was bound to my neighbour.

It was the first and last time that I saw Violet touched by a shade of jealousy; she pulsated all over with anger, and, though half laughing at herself, involuntarily assumed a proud, defiant air, and spoke contemptuously of the unknown, judging her, notwithstanding her extreme elegance, to be probably some *modiste* or *couturière*.

She said to me that, though she felt no uneasiness on my account, the other's effrontery irritated her; and I, to whom this jealousy of hers was so new and delicious, stimulated it

further by keeping silence or else praising the stranger's appearance and charm.

Violet soon observed this, however, and we finished by both laughing merrily until, between the river mists and those on the horizon, the colossal towers of the Cologne Cathedral appeared rising out of the midst of a flat barren country.

If you, *amica mia*, ever visit the venerable and fantastic city of Cologne, go into the quaint church of Sankt Gereon and pray for her who was so gay and happy there, amusing herself so much over a ridiculous monk, sculptured in the "vorhalle," that she afterwards almost felt remorse. Go also into the dark cloisters of Sankt Peter, which surround a tiny garden plot of vivid green, and gather a flower in memory of the consolation which Violet found in the innocent peace there, after the horror caused by the dreadful Rubens in the church. And, above all, go to the museum to regard, in a room on the ground floor, the spiritual hands of a Madonna by Wilhelm of Köln, after which you can say that you have seen Violet's. Frau Emma pretended to find the same resemblance in the face, but that depicted by the old master was much more placid and mystical, and had quite another character from Violet's beauty, which was full of modern thought and hidden sentiment.

"I find," her husband said very truly, "that

this Madonna does not resemble Violet Yves, but has the same voice."

We remained a day and a half in Cologne, and, on our way back to Rüdesheim, stopped at Königswinter, towards sunset, to mount to the Drachenburg.

The Steeles, with much gestures and exclamations, gave vent to their enthusiasm for the splendid many-fronted Burg ; a bizarre mass of towers, pinnacles, stairs, balconies and statues of bronze and marble, covered all over with verses and mottoes addressed to the sun, winds, and the deep Rhine, which, east and west, as far as the eye could reach, lost itself on the horizons—vision of antiquity, yet penetrated by modern sentiment, which a great poet in stone has fixed on that elevated solitude, 600 feet above the river.

Violet was silent, overcome by admiration ; she sat by the entrance away from the Rhine, reposing her gaze on the green cones which rose, near at hand, behind the Drachenfels, and declared that, as she felt incapable of taking in anything further at present, she renounced the climb to the summit, where the ruins of the old castle are ; she insisted, however, on my going up there.

The Steeles had been there already, and decided on remaining at the Burg ; Paul went to examine closer the bronze animals on the balconies, and his wife began to copy in her

note-book the inscription on the north-west façade.

When I left Violet was alone; on the ground near her was written in mosaic:—

“Geh’ hin, geh’ aus,
Bleib’ Freund dem Haus.”¹

“Bleib Freund!” she said, extending her hand to me with a smile.

Without speaking I signified a dissent, for I hated the cold word “Freund.”

She understood me, ceased smiling, and accepting my refusal, gave me also her other hand. I held both in mine a moment, then, as I was about to leave, she said, in a low tone, “I have a presentiment of evil.”

I started; since Assmannshausen grave forebodings had also often come to me, but I had always chased them away as wicked thoughts. When Violet appeared pallid and frailer, I sought to persuade myself that it was the effect of so much past agitation, and would not confess to myself that each morning, going to her, I half feared to find her ill.

Now I asked whether she were suffering, protesting that I had not the slightest wish to see the Drachenfels; she replied that she felt well, and that I must go at once, for that it would be too disappointing to her if I missed seeing them on her account.

¹ “Go in, go out,
Remain friend of the house.”

I do not think that I employed more than fifteen minutes in mounting from the Burg to the summit, where there was something going on that day, for many people were ascending and descending, both on foot and on horse-back ; ladies, officers and students from Bonn with caps of every colour.

Passing by the “Terrasse” Inn, full of revellers and noise, I reached the deserted top of the mountain, gathered a flower among the ruins for Violet, gave a distracted glance at the demolished towers and dungeons, and then descended in leaps, impatient to leave those sombre heights and to be with my fiancée again, imagining all sorts of misfortunes, and then reproaching myself for this as folly.

A few steps from the balustrade of the Drachenburg I met Steele, who, though smiling, wore an embarrassed expression, and asked immediately, with over great eagerness, what my impressions of the ruins were.

Observing him closer I saw that he was pale ; he must have read my suspicions in my eyes, for he made a movement as though to restrain me.

“ My God ! ” I exclaimed, “ what has happened ? ” springing forward as I spoke.

He seized my arm, saying : “ Wait, wait ! there is nothing the matter—only wait a little ! ”

I broke from him and rushed to the place

where I had left Violet ; she was not there ; no one was to be seen ; I looked around in bewilderment.

"Listen !" cried Steele, who was hurrying after me, but I would not hear, and made rapidly the tour of the Burg, until, on the side facing the Rhine, I caught sight of Violet and stood abruptly still, breathless, as though struck to the heart.

She did not appear indisposed and was standing with her back towards me, speaking, with vehemence, to a man unknown to me, who listened, a few paces from her, hat in hand, with uplifted and angry brow.

Frau Steele was also there and, observing me, came towards me as though to keep me back, just as her husband had done.

I guessed on the instant that it was the man from Wetzlar ; he also divined who I was, and, by the flash that shone in his eyes, Violet became aware of my presence and turned in my direction.

"There he is," she said to her companion ; then she smiled and motioned to me with a movement of the head ; adding, "come !" with such a tender joyous glance that all my jealousy disappeared and I was immediately at my place beside her.

"An acquaintance from Nuremberg," she said to me. "Signor——" pronouncing my name, "my fiancé."

Then she took my arm, leant heavily on it and took leave of the other by a bow, saying, without extending her hand, "Adieu, Herr —, I wish you happiness."

For a moment I thought he would reply something offensive and held myself prepared.

He restrained himself, however, made, in silence, an exaggerated bow, full of irony, and went quickly away swinging the hat that he still held in his hand.

Violet drew me in the opposite direction, pressing my arm with all her force ; I felt too agitated to speak or to do aught except respond with my arm to her pressure.

"Caro, caro!" she said to me tenderly, fixing her eyes anxiously on mine, "has this hurt you? Do you still suffer? You know how I love you and that you are everything to me! I could not now give you up, I don't know how I could have resisted you so long! Oh, you must not suffer, remember that 'I am thou!'"

I replied that the scene had distressed me as was only natural, but that I had complete confidence in her love and was only anxious on her account lest her health should suffer from this shock ; I felt that my voice was changed though I had done my utmost to render it natural.

"Oh no," she said in reply, "I feel quite well, really well."

I was indeed blind and dull not to perceive the heroic efforts she was making to control herself and hide her state from me; a few steps from Königswinter she stopped and drew my attention to the red, blazing sun, which was descending, behind the poplars on the island, in a cold almost winterish sky.

"How one feels the north!" she said, "how happy I am that you see this country!"

She had scarcely uttered the words when she fainted and would have fallen had I not clasped her in my arms.

CHAPTER XLVI

A NERVOUS attack followed, which lasted through the night; a physician was called in and Violet was further attended by Frau Emma and the daughter of the proprietor of the hotel; in the adjoining room I watched, in the greatest anxiety.

At my request the doctor remained till midnight, then he left smiling at my fears and repeating, as he lit his pipe, "I understand, I quite understand, I do not see any danger, I do not see any danger."

Towards morning Violet grew somewhat quieter, and Frau Steele came out to tell me that it was Signorina Yves' earnest wish to return to Rüdesheim by the earliest possible train.

"You are opposed to this?" I asked.

"No," she replied, hesitating a little, "I think that Violet will be equal to it, and that it is better that we should go."

I saw that she had some secret reason for this opinion which she did not dare to tell me, and, knowing her to be a wise, intelligent woman, bowed my head in silence.

Half an hour later Violet sent for me; I

found her exhausted, but ready and determined to leave.

On my risking a word of dissuasion, she said that she wished to regard herself already as my wife and to obey me in everything, but that in this she hoped I would be guided by her judgment.

Then, at a sign from her, Frau Steele left us alone, and seeing that Violet wished to tell me what had taken place at the Drachenburg, I implored her not to do this as it would agitate her too much.

She embraced me, hiding her face on my breast, and after a long silence, said, in a suffocated voice : "I beg of you, let us leave at once, at once!"

Some hours afterwards we arrived at Rüdesheim, after a comparatively fortunate journey, during which no mention was made of what had happened. At the house, Violet, yielding to our prayers, went at once to her room to lie down.

Next morning, very early, I received the following letter :—

"Caro,—When yesterday, at Königswinter, I was left alone with you, it was my intention to tell you everything, but I was not able, as you saw ; all that I could do was to clasp you within my arms, for you are my force and my life, and I need you so much !

"I thought for a moment of getting Emma, who knows *nearly everything*, to speak, but then said to myself, that between you and me, no one should ever interfere, and that I must relate it to you.

"You know how and why I ceased to love this man ; now he has, unfortunately, taken it into his head to make himself loved again, and to be my husband. I would not have believed it possible that love could thus take new birth, for there was certainly a time in which he appeared to have lost every particle of affection for me, although he now denies this.

"He knows Emma, who was even at one time his confidante, and, finding us together at the Drachenburg, had wished her to be present at his offer, and to hear his passionate supplications.

"With all my force I repulsed him, so much so, that my horror offended him, and he threatened that he would seek an interview with you, hoping thus to cause the rupture of our engagement, although I told him that you knew everything already ; further he vowed that if he could not have me, he would take his life.

"I fly to you, and clasp you close to me—oh, caro ! tell me, for the love of God, that nothing, that no one, can ever divide us !

"You must not meet him, or let him speak with you. I do not fear that he could relate

anything more than I have already done, but when he tells of how I loved him, and how my love appeared inextinguishable—as I myself believed it to be—it is but the truth, and though he has been gravely wanting towards me, and has now no right to complain if I love you, I feel that it is pitiful that after all I am only like other people, who can love, forget, and love again. All those who have faith in the nobility of human nature have the right to be grieved, and you, yourself, listening to him, could only lower your brow; and I do not wish that you should ever have to do this on my account, ever, ever!

"I will not think any further of him or his threat of killing himself, for which I reproached him as cowardice, and can have no other duty.

"My one desire now is to become yours, irrevocably yours, as soon as possible, and then to go where you will, as long as it is far away from here!

"Come at nine. I have already spoken to the Steeles about hastening our wedding. Paul is a true friend, full of zeal, and is fortunately on the best of terms with the Bishop of Mayence; we shall arrange all.

"V. Y."

The arrangements for the civil marriage were far from being completed, therefore, in

consideration of Violet's health ; the Steeles waived their former objection to having only the religious ceremony in Rüdesheim, and saying : "It is now a question of life and death," Paul left immediately for Mayence.

This was a Tuesday, and the first publication of the banns in Italy, as well as in Rüdesheim, was to have taken place on the next Sunday ; I do not know how Steele was able to persuade the bishop, but, after much exchanging of telegrams between Mayence and Rome, on Friday a dispensation from all customary formalities arrived.

We were all in the salon together when Paul entered, bringing the good news. At the thought that in a few hours she would be my wife, Violet turned very pale, and clasped her hands on her heart ; I thanked Steele with a silent embrace.

"May you always be as happy!" Frau Emma said, clasping my fiancée in her arms.

"My poor mother," whispered Violet, sobbing, "my poor father."

"They are here with you, though we do not see them," replied her friend, also much agitated. "They are here to bless you, and give you into your husband's keeping."

Violet held out one hand towards me, covering her eyes with the other. "I receive you from them," I said, taking and pressing her hand. "I feel them both here."

Then she turned her sweet, earnest face to me, and placing her hands on my shoulders, whispered in my ear : "Yes, *caro!* and yours are here also. I love them both."

I went out with Steele to arrange with the "Pfarrer" about the hour of the ceremony, and I then related to him that I had received a letter from Herr —, that morning, from Bingen, asking me to meet him next day ; I had, of course, not spoken of this to Violet, but I was full of anxiety, as Bingen was only a quarter of an hour from Rüdesheim, and this man was sure to keep himself informed of what was going on ; if he heard that the marriage was in course of preparation, God alone knew what would happen.

Steele shared my fears, and we decided that it would be better to have the marriage secretly celebrated under cover of the night's darkness.

We told the clergyman that the same grave reasons, on account of which the dispensation had been accorded, required the unusual hour, and he therefore agreed to perform the ceremony at two in the morning, after which we could go straight from the church to the station, and take the three o'clock train south to Triberg, or perhaps only as far as Stuttgart.

When we returned and told our arrangement to the ladies, Frau Emma expressed

much astonishment, and could not understand why such an inconvenient and romantic hour had been selected.

Why not have left by the mid-day train, and had the marriage at nine or ten? Now Violet could not even wear her white bridal dress, and must go to the altar in her travelling costume!

I replied that I preferred to travel at night, as we would thus escape the sun and dust.

Violet smiled, and I saw plainly that she also found the idea singular; but the fact that it was I who had proposed it, was enough to make her defend it. I feared that she would remark the signs Steele was making to his wife to be silent, but fortunately she did not.

"Come, barbarous and cruel man," Frau Emma said to me, "come and see what is here!" and she showed me into the next room where, spread out on the bed, by two little white satin shoes, lay the elegant white robe belonging to my fiancée.

A thrill of pleasure passed through me, as I felt that I was suddenly introduced into the privacy of the beautiful being who was to be mine, and that I thus became and was acknowledged owner. Violet had perhaps the same thought, for she coloured even to her neck.

I then took leave hastily and hurried to the Hotel Krass, where I needed some hours to put everything in order.

I wrote a quantity of letters to relatives and

friends, announcing, *ex abrupto*, my marriage, with the intention of posting them next day at Triberg or Stuttgart, although, thinking of the morrow, it appeared to me impossible that I would have mind for anything except love and joy.

As the idea of taking with me to the altar a shadow of resentment against anyone was repugnant to me, I wrote also to my brother, briefly but affectionately, and added an amiable line for my sister-in-law. I expected that this last would cost me much to write, and was glad when it did not, for I felt that Violet's generous spirit was already working within me, as though we were indeed one.

It was dark when I began to write a list of names and addresses for Steele to send the printed announcements to afterwards, when these were ready.

Raising my face sometimes to reflect or recall some name half escaped my memory, I saw through the window the lights of Bingen, and was assailed by the image of the man there who wished to speak with me.

My God, I could guess what he would say, and the simple possibility of ever hearing it from him caused me acute irritation! Why on earth did he persist? Did he think to regain Violet by force, or to have the right to do so? Was he mad enough to come and say this to me?

Then I wondered where he was at that moment, whether strolling under the distant lamps, or watching under my windows, or perhaps even spying with suspicion and passion around Violet's dwelling. At this thought my heart throbbed with rage, and I then reproved my imagination, calmed myself and returned to my writing.

Towards eleven I got my luggage taken to the station, and left the hotel.

There were neither stars nor moon, and in the silent streets of Rüdesheim it was so dark that I could not see whether anyone followed or preceded me ; every now and again I paused instinctively to listen, but heard neither voice nor step ; the only sound was that of a train on the left bank, and this made me think of the night I had stood at the window, holding the light, and watching with emotion the train which was bringing Violet to me.

"You are truly a poet!" Frau Emma said when I entered. "You have not thought of your witness."

I struck my forehead, it was true ! or, more correctly, I had thought of this, and had chosen Herr Grossmann of Wiesbaden, a former professor of mine, returned to his country since 1866, but in the precipitation of events I had completely forgotten him.

I must have assumed a very disconsolate expression, for she hastened to assure me,

smilingly, that her husband, who was Violet's witness, had thought of this, and had gone out, an hour before, to wake up a friend and impose this duty on him.

While we were speaking the door opened very softly, and Violet appeared in the white bridal costume that I had seen before.

I gave an exclamation of surprise.

"You must at least see her in it!" Frau Steele said, adding, "now take a good look at her while I go to look after a little supper."

She went out, and I held out my arms to my fiancée.

"Are you pleased to see me in this dress?" she whispered on my breast. "All the others see their brides so and I wished that you should also see me."

She lifted her face, gave a shy, luminous smile, then, lowering it again, said in a subdued voice, "Am I worthy of it?"

I gave no answer in words, but she understood well my reply.

"This is the last time," she resumed after a long silence, "that we shall be alone together as betrothed. I feared so much to die before this hour! Do you know what I wrote out a short time ago?"—she placed her hands on my shoulders, and with her mouth at my ear, murmured—"My testament!" Then looking me in the eyes, she added, smiling again, "I did not leave you anything, think of that!"

Then she became thoughtful, threw her arms around my neck and kissed me with passion.

"My God!" she exclaimed, "to think that I resisted you so long."

I related to her that I also had made my will, perhaps at the same moment as she had made hers.

"Ah," she said, "if God would only let us die together! I have not courage to ask Him to let me die first, knowing how you would suffer."

"Let it be according to His will," I said.

"Yes, yes! His will be done! But if I go first do not grieve too much, remember that I shall still be always with you—with God and you."

Steps and voices were heard in the garden, and Violet retired; it was Steele bringing my witness, whom I had never seen or even heard named.

Paul had the air of one who has just played his neighbour some trick and is enjoying it.

His companion, a grotesque figure, attired in an extraordinary medley of garments, appeared still half dreaming, and made me two or three alarmed and deferential salaams as though I had been the Emperor of China.

"Ah, you are here!" Steele said to me. "On my way here I saw a form entering the

garden of the Hotel Krass and imagined that it was you."

His words startled and alarmed me.

"Oh," said Steele reassuringly, "it was probably some romantic stranger."

He presented his friend and then, impatient to have the latter's costume admired, hurried away to bring his wife, who without much ceremony laughed outright at the newcomer's appearance.

Violet also came in shortly afterwards, but neither she nor I felt any inclination to laugh, notwithstanding all the signs and grimaces of our friend Paul.

At midnight supper was announced, to the great amazement of Herr Bröhl, who summoned up courage to ask me privately if the marriage were really going to take place, or was the whole affair merely one of his worthy friend's jokes.

The meal was not very gay, although Steele did his utmost by giving a brilliant description of his nocturnal visit to Herr Bröhl's house.

Violet and I were not in a state to eat anything, and there were besides too many lights, so that the heat was intense; through the open window one saw frequent lightning and heard some ominous rumbles of thunder.

As towards the end we drank the rich "Rüdesheimer" of our hosts, Frau Emma, who knew of the other "Rüdesheimer" drunk

in the Eichstätt woods, begged me to repeat the verses composed to Luise ; Steele observed that now I should have said the first line so :—

“To thee, fair bride, I quaff the foaming wine.”

Then, after he had himself proposed Violet's health in a most poetic speech, he said that my witness should propose mine ; poor Herr Bröhl defended himself for some time, protesting that he was no poet.

“Great God !” cried Paul, “you can at least lift your glass, say ‘Long live the bridegroom,’ and then drink !”

Bröhl raised his glass, but as at that moment a tremendous peal of thunder sounded, he dropped it, and the wine spurted into the air.

Frau Emma screamed, Paul made uproar enough for four, and my unfortunate witness stood gaping as if turned to stone.

This time Violet laughed from her heart, and I cannot express the joy this caused me ; I felt as if that limpid laugh had carried away the last touch of sadness from her soul.

At half-past one it commenced raining and, to avoid the threatening downpour, we at once made our way to the church, as the carriages had only been ordered to take us from there to the station.

We did not pass the Hotel Krass, and I could not therefore ascertain whether the form Steele had seen were still there ; it was in any

case so dark that I would have found it difficult to discern anything.

The church was not yet open, and we had to wait more than five minutes in the rain, which now began to fall heavily; not a being was about.

When finally I was able to kneel beside Violet in the dim church, I fear that I did not thank God as I should have done for the fulfilment of the promise heard in dream, and rather yielded to a movement of pride, thinking of the long struggle, won at last, by constancy and strength.

Violet prayed with her head bowed on the bench, and afterwards, as the altar lights were being lit, told me that she had begged so hard that she might be able to render me happy.

The nuptial ceremony began.

Before replying in German to the interrogation of the clergyman, I said *Si* in Italian, and it seemed to me that I heard also an imperceptible *Si* from Violet's lips.

We were henceforth one—one also in reverence for the dear distant fatherland, *Italia*.

A carriage drew up noisily outside the door; the "Pfarrer" said "*gratulor, gratulor*," saluting us with both hands; I gave my arm to my wife and we went out, my God, how happy!

Violet's luggage was already at the station, but as she mounted into the carriage, she

remembered that she had forgotten some keys in her room.

The station at Rüdesheim is at exactly the opposite end of the town from the Steele's villa, and the Catholic church stands about half-way between the two, therefore, as we had not too much time to spare, Paul offered to go in search of the keys.

Herr Bröhl was now allowed to return to his interrupted slumber, and we drove straight to the station, where, as it was still raining torrents, Frau Emma and Violet went to the waiting-room while I saw about the luggage, which was considerable ; indeed the half asleep employé wished us elsewhere before he had finished booking all the trunks.

All at once I heard Steele laughing with the ladies and rattling the keys, and the next moment he came towards me, extolling loudly the rapidity with which he had accomplished his mission. When he was near he murmured, however, gravely, " You must be careful, the man from Bingen is here."

My first thought was to go out and confront him, so, pretending to speak about the luggage receipt which I had in my hand, I asked whether he were in the station.

" No," Paul replied ; " I saw him ringing at the Hotel Krass. He probably suspected something and wished to make sure."

I breathed again ; the people of the hotel

might delay in opening, in understanding what he wanted, and in replying to him. There was still hope that we would be left before he could arrive at the station, as our train was due in five minutes, and he would thus lose all trace of us.

"We shall now leave you," Steele said, "and if we meet this man, I shall detain him."

We joined the others, and Paul took his wife's arm. "Listen," he said, "perhaps this poor pair will not afterwards have the luck to find an empty coupé, so let us now treat them to five precious minutes alone."

Frau Emma opened her mouth to protest, but on an eloquent pressure from her husband's arm, remained silent. Neither she nor Violet could understand the idea, but Paul gave them no time to think about it, and I had barely an instant in which to embrace this incomparable friend, and murmur a word of gratitude, before he drew his wife away and disappeared in the rain.

When, two minutes later, the train from Assmannshausen arrived, I put Violet into the first coupé I found open, although she hesitated, interrogating me with a look, on seeing that there were already two occupants standing by the door.

We passed beyond them to the opposite end of the carriage, and immediately afterwards I

heard someone running. The conductor cried "Quick!" A man paused by our door to try and look within; our companions, however, leant quickly forward, saying that there was no room, and he went away; the departure bell rang and the train began to move slowly.

My God! how had the man escaped Steele? Had he or not got into the train?

Violet had not remarked anything; she took off her hat and gloves, and, as there was a shade on the lamp, and we were in shadow, leant her head on my shoulder and abandoned her hands in mine; then little by little she drew them on to her heart, smiling and looking to see whether the others observed her.

When the train was well started she whispered to me:—

"I hear a heart entreat.
What says its throbbing sweet?
'Come thou to me!
I am thine, only thine,
Come thou, my love divine,
Come thou to me!'"

In silence I very gently and lingeringly kissed her hair, drinking in her love, her thought, the very essence of her being.

We had been travelling for perhaps twenty minutes, when the train slackened its speed and stopped. I looked out; no station was in sight. We were stationary in the deserted country on the bank of the Rhine, which flowed

dark and noisily along, and were not, I think, far from Erlach.

One of our companions shook himself up, asked something of a passing guard, of whose reply I only caught the words, "*Fünf Minuten*," and then went back to his sleep.

Violet resumed her reclining attitude against me, asking whether next day, in case we stopped at Stuttgart, she ought to put on the same costume, or would I prefer the white woollen one faced with white velvet that I had so much admired.

As I was about to reply, a head appeared suddenly outside our window pane, remained there an instant, and then vanished.

Recognising the man, I started up, pressing Violet's hands so violently that she turned quickly round, but the face was no longer there.

"What was it?" she asked.

"Nothing," I replied.

"No, there was something. Tell me what it was."

She had seen a flash of surprise and anger in my eyes, and did not believe my denial. As we were not alone she could not interrogate me with the impetus that was in her heart, but, pressing my arm, she entreated softly in English, "Tell me; please tell me!"

I replied that I had thought to see some-

thing moving in the darkness, but that it had probably been only fancy.

I then resumed the previous topic, asking her to wear her white costume and the little flat-brimmed Panama hat with a satin ribbon which went so well with it.

Violet, however, neither smiled nor replied, and the passionate gaze with which she still continued to regard me showed that she was still anxious.

Seeing that the two other inmates of the carriage were asleep, she clasped my arm suddenly with both hands and murmured ardently :—

“ You must never, never deceive me ! ”

For reply I bent and kissed, with my whole soul, my beloved wife, and she, not understanding all that this long caress expressed, was tranquillised and leant back against my shoulder, smiling.

A train, evidently the cause of our delay, passed by, and ours went on again, arriving a quarter of an hour later at Biebrich, where passengers for Wiesbaden had to change.

I felt that I must prevent Violet from becoming aware of the man's presence in the train ; and as there was no longer hope that we could escape his notice, nothing remained but to seek him out and order him not to persecute us.

Therefore, saying to Violet that I would

return immediately, I descended with the intention of searching each carriage for him.

He was in the second next one to us, which was full of people, so that I would probably not have recognised him ; he, however, saw me, and immediately sprang out.

In a low but resolute voice I demanded what he wished from my wife and myself, and at the same moment he, with the distorted face of a maniac, asked in an excited tone why I had not done him the honour of replying to his letter.

I answered that I had considered it unnecessary, and requested him to cease molesting my wife ; on which he broke out into words of rage and menace, protesting that he would not submit to my intimidations.

When I maintained my right to make them, he cried that it was not his habit to give annoyance to ladies, but that he would have satisfaction from me.

I replied that I did not fear him, and, as the guards were requesting people to take their seats, turned away.

“ Go ! ” he then cried loudly. “ We shall meet again, and what I wished to say to you in private I shall then say to you in public, before the lady, when and where I choose ! ”

Jumping into our coupé, I found that our companions had left and that Violet was alone.

One glance at her altered face told me that she had overheard.

She stood an instant, breathless, regarding me in silence, then sprang towards me and flung her arms around my neck.

The train started.

I sat pressing her convulsed and throbbing form in my arms, kissing the fair head that weighed so heavily on my shoulder, trembling myself, but not as yet suspecting the awful thing that was being consummated in that moment by the mysterious will of God.

I called her : “*Cara, Cara!*” but she gave no reply ; the pressure of her arms round my neck became less, but it was not possible to separate them ; when I rose to lay her on the seat, her head fell back on my arm, but her hands remained clasped.

Vainly, amid the noise of the train, I cried for help, then with a despairing voice I called on God, who alone could hear me.

Kneeling down, I placed her in a recumbent attitude, covering her with kisses and tears, supplicating her to hear me, to reply to me.

The inert arms still held me, but I began to have the terrible idea that she was dying, and forced myself to cry aloud until breath failed me ; then, when I had no longer voice, I stretched out my arms, like a fanatic, trying to arrest the furious speed of the train.

Her hands remained clasped.

I kissed her mouth, her eyes, her hair, her shoulders, her breast. *Cara amore*, she could not have had more kisses from me if she had been full of life!

When the motion of the train stirred her head or feet, I smiled with hope and joy amid my sobs ; but her dear face became cold and solemn, until at last I no longer cried, and only uttered her name sometimes tenderly.

However, when by the mercy of God we arrived at Kastel, I redoubled my cries, so that the door was opened even before the train stopped, and many people came rushing.

"A doctor!" I exclaimed, as with my beloved in my arms I passed through the crowd, who repeated after me : "A doctor! a doctor!"

I laid her softly down on a sofa in the waiting-room, which immediately filled with curious strangers, some of whom encouraged me, saying that the lady was reviving ; others, after looking for a moment, departed in silence. When the doctor was announced I saw two of the onlookers shrug their shoulders.

A great stillness fell in the room as the doctor entered and approached the inanimate figure ; I watched him, holding my breath.

After observing her face, he raised his eyebrows without saying anything ; then, as he tried to unclose the still clasped hands, I begged him, more with my eyes than my voice, to desist.

Still, without giving any sign of his opinion, he felt her pulse and listened at her heart; finally, he asked for a match, which was some time being found.

When he lit it and placed it before Violet's lips, I had not courage to look, and covered my face with my hands.

All present gathered softly around the sofa, and a long profound silence followed; then, something was blown out, there was a sound of many footsteps withdrawing softly, then silence again.

A hand touched me, I opened my eyes, but saw nothing. The doctor asked me whether the lady were my wife. Hearing that she was, he said simply: "*Povero Signore!*"

I knelt down beside the sofa, raised her dear hands, and, passing them gently over my head, laid them on my neck, and did not stir again.

It is finished. I have told all.

L'ENVOI

VIOLET, beloved and eternal companion of my life, I feel that there is a reproach in your fixed gaze, though you smile, and caress my hair with your transparent hand, for my narrative is *not* finished, I have not yet told all.

I must also relate how much of you God still concedes to me after ten years of mortal severance, how you still live for me, and what the fruit of our invisibly-made union is.

October is ending as I write this last page in the little village, lost among the mountains, where my family had its humble origin. Here, every year, I am in the habit of passing a month of a simpler, more contemplative life than my friends would tolerate.

Through the open window the soft autumnal sun, the deep calm of noonday, and the sound of the bell that so moved me in my imaginative childhood, enter into this room, where my venerable parents slept, and which I have chosen for a nuptial chamber, my nuptial chamber with the dead.

Alas! Violet's wedding gown is not here; my friends the Steeles know where that is. But her little travelling toque, the graceful

costume she wore in her last hours, the simple white robe that she had on at Rüdesheim, when for the first time I clasped her in my arms, hang here in the wardrobe.

Her handkerchief with her monogram as bride, her gloves, her watch, her fan of morocco leather, her bracelets and her rings are on the marble bureau, together with the little black velvet ribbon, which, as I kiss, recalls to me the fragrant warmth of her dear throat.

On the bed the pillow case bears her initials, and on a little table beside it stand her favourite sonnets from Shakespeare; her "Imitation of Christ" bound in ivory; a bronze lamp given her by Frau Emma; and a small miniature of her mother, painted by her father, which she always carried with her.

In the davenport, among the paper scented with lily of the valley, flower dear to her, there is a letter from her to the uncles in Nuremberg, begun in Rüdesheim and never finished; it was in her travelling-bag with two roses from the Steele's garden, the powder of which I keep, together with that of the little Eichstätt rosebud whose perfume died in Violet's hour of bitter pain.

In the same davenport are also the verses and souvenirs which I wrote for her and which I have here related only in part; the verses

from Rüdesheim and some others of which no one will ever read a word.

These are all precious relics, but I have far more than this of Violet—her presence is still with me.

There is no question here of spiritual manifestations ; I am no spiritualist nor do I need a new doctrine to make me believe in the survival of souls and our communion with those who have left this mortal life.

I do not ask for and therefore do not see phantoms ; I do not listen for, nor do I hear, whispers from the invisible ; I have no mysterious contact with shadows.

What I possess is better, is true life and power ; I feel my Beloved with faith only, but with a peculiar and real, though intermittent, sense also ; with a feeling that has as yet no name, but which is, I should say, the substance, the principle of our imperfect corporal senses, and which gives me my inspiratory flashes.

I feel Violet from time to time, in that part of the soul where thoughts are born without our will, where the impulses of good and evil, of weariness and fervour, of joy and of sadness rise ; I feel her always in the good impulses and also in some strange thoughts that come to me although I do not understand how she operates in me.

She lives in my conscience now, as when I wrote :—

"One face I ever see, and that is thine."

I still submit to her every thought, word and action of my life, and it is not possible that I shall ever again be in great doubt with regard to my duties towards God and men, so prompt and clear is her counsel, which still bears a personal imprint of her ideas, of her rectitude, of her disdain for all prejudice and human respect; there is, however, no trace of some slight imperfections which she had and which she certainly left in the earth with her mortal remains, because I, who once knew and loved them, can no longer imagine her with them.

For instance, when living she found it difficult to pardon injuries done me, such as severe judgments on my works; now it is not so, and, if I read anything insulting about myself, it is she who, immediately, calls me and raises me lovingly to her away from all rancour, soothing me into a calm that is not pride.

Then, as every time that I obey her, the consciousness of the fresh good that she works in me gives me the supreme joy of knowing that she has certainly from it a recompense and that it increases her happiness and glory.

It is true that I, miserable mortal, often fail to regulate my life as God, through her, shows me I should, for my weakness is great and the depraved inclinations of my nature are not extinct.

Also the sterile melancholy which once used to assail me so frequently has not quite disappeared, then doubt freezes and prostrates me, I lose all sense of communion with my companion and things divine, and, almost as if profiting by her absence, unworthy sentiments arise, in spite of me, in my heart.

Should my opposing will then waver and fall, a sudden anguish that is not mine alone, overcomes me. I have the acute feeling of her return, and, afterwards of her pardon, although this is not as quickly and serenely given as she would have accorded it when living.

It is then my punishment to feel that she has suffered through my fault, though how this suffering is consistent with her happy state near God, He alone knows.

I think of the dream in which I first heard her voice, and feel, that, though she has drawn me from the abyss, I may fall back there again, and in this reflection there is humiliation and pain which I accept as conducive to salvation.

Sometimes, this is the hardest confession, in the presence of young and beautiful women, who might perhaps love me, I become disturbed, and imagine the possibility of being unfaithful to Violet, though in this, my heart would certainly take no part.

I am then assailed by an insurmountable

terror and agitation of mind, from which, exhausted, I seek refuge in the passionate hope of being soon freed from my earthly body.

In dreams now I never hear the sweet voice and very rarely see her ; when I do dream of her, she never appears as if come from the dead, but always as she was in life, and very rarely does she embrace or kiss me ; when this does happen I awake in despair that she is not by me, and can scarcely believe it.

Yes, the inextinguishable love of her earthly form also makes war against me, and there are moments in which the idea of a future transformation of her body, even though it be glorious, oppresses me.

In the life to come I would wish Violet to have her rippling tresses, her wave - coloured eyes, her white hands, and, oh ! her lips that were so sweet ; I would wish her to have the same form and languid way of moving, the slender waist which I encircled and the arms that clasped themselves around my neck.

I do not dream of splendour and would not wish her to be more beautiful than she was here.

I know, however, that these ideas are blind and foolish, and thoroughly recognise the incompetence of our human heart and imagination to conceive our future state of glory.

I believe that the essence of each body will remain recognisable, and in this confidence I restrain my senses and rest.

In reference to my art I never have any inner communication from Violet.

When we became affianced she asked me if I would allow her to remain by me while I worked, promising, with a smile and an unforgettable accent that she would always keep silence and not even regard me—so it is now; perhaps she regards me but she is silent.

Nevertheless she hears and loves all that I write and enjoys it submissively as in life; and if my books do not please others, let them say so, preach and print it and leave me in peace, since I am content to have this inner joy for my recompense—the world, *amica mia*, will never spoil it as it has spoiled others for me.

Ten years have elapsed since Violet's death, and I have the secret consolation of knowing that I have satisfied in substance the desire she expressed when, as we sailed the Rhine from Bingen to Rüdesheim, she said to me that if she were taken unexpectedly from me I was not to make our engagement known to any one in Italy.

The catastrophe occurred and was known in Rüdesheim before Steele had despatched the announcements of the marriage, and the letters which I had directed to my relatives and most intimate friends I still had by me, intending to post them in Stuttgart.

In Italy I only confided in my brother, and

obtained from him a formal, solemn promise of secrecy.

You afterwards related to me the talk current about my love affairs, which I found to be very far from the truth.

This present manuscript was already far advanced when you invited me last winter to your large Lenten receptions. I came, you may remember, three times, and, on the last occasion, had a rather long conversation with the beautiful and admired Signora — who persisted in seeking my society that evening.

Finding me, perhaps, too different from others, she said to me: "Either you find me antipathetic or you hide some secret in your heart," and then began to question me about the colour of the hair and eyes of my lady-love, asking me at how many hundreds of kilometres off I stood adoring her in my excessive spiritualism.

As I responded a little ironically, she whispered to me: "Take care; I know what is in your house in—. I cannot now remember the name of the village, but, in short, up there among the mountains."

How did she know? I do not bring servants here, nor do I receive friends.

Although struck to the heart, I immediately replied that she might speak aloud for that there were no secrets in my house.

Then you came near and said, "What an animated conversation!" and our old friend X.—a harmless squire of dames—who had for some time been hovering round us full of suspicion, took this opportunity to intervene, saying: "You are speaking about some book, I fancy?" "Exactly!" replied my companion, "we were talking of a very interesting book, not yet published, which will have for title, 'The Poet's Mystery.'"

You remember? You gave me a compromising look and invited us to take tea; we rose and the conversation was broken.

My first distress over, I reassured myself by reflecting that, even if a profane curiosity had entered here, it could not have deciphered the enigma of these relics; nevertheless it weighed on me that my treasure scarcely any longer belonged to me alone.

Now I have really finished.

Did you think that there were such pages in the "closed book," as you used to call me, and does it seem to you that the world was right to suspect them?

Do I not take part in everyday life, do I not work, do I not enjoy the beauty of things, am I not moved by the tragedy and comedy of human nature, am I not always serene, sometimes even gay? No, the world may grope in my rooms, but it can never read in my heart!

I look at my watch ; five in the morning !
I have been here writing since eleven last
night, and my head is heavy with sleep and
confused phantasms.

All the same I am glad to have finished at
this hour, for the dawn is near and my lamp
is dying. Is it not a good augury ?

Addio, amica mia.

FINIS





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